



## Revitalising Border Towns and Villages: Assets and potentiality in the Irish Border Region

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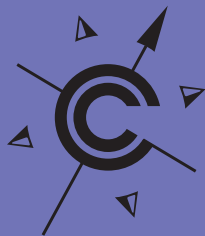
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BORDER  
STUDIES**  
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# **The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland**

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**The Centre for  
Cross Border Studies**

This edition of the Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland  
is dedicated to the memory of our Board Member

Ann McGeeney  
1962-2014

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## Chairperson's Foreword

**Helen Johnston**



The work of the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) over the last year reflects the themes of referendum and remembrance. The UK referendum on membership of the European Union was a major preoccupation for CCBS given the implications for various exchanges across the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as relations between Ireland and the UK as a whole and between the UK and the rest of Europe. Work on remembrance was attuned to some of the events to mark the centenary of 1916, with the Centre involved in a number of occasions of historical importance.

A more personal remembrance is of our own late Board member, Ann McGeeney, as documented in the comprehensive and thoughtful tribute in this Journal by her friend and colleague, Kathy Walsh. I personally knew Ann well when she was the Joint Manager of Border Action and I was the Director of the Combat Poverty Agency. Ann was an exceptional networker, skilled in her ability to link people and issues together to achieve a common purpose, which made her such an effective cross-border worker and peace builder. I was delighted when she agreed to join the Board of the Centre for Cross Border Studies where she brought first hand cross-border experience and community development practice to the organisation. One the projects we were working on when she became ill was engaging with the Board members and staff to prepare the Centre's vision, mission and strategic plan. I hope you take the opportunity to read Kathy's insightful article in the Journal.

The remainder of this Foreword provides a record of the Centre's main activities over the past year, which has been busy and diverse. I'd like to take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation of the quality of the work carried out by Ruth and her staff team of Anthony, Mairead, Annmarie, Eimear and Tricia, and for their commitment to the work of the Centre. I'd like to thank Martin for his contribution to the work of the Centre and to wish him well in his new role. I'd also like to thank the Board members for their invaluable advice and support in their role of providing governance and guidance to the Centre. I acknowledge the contribution of our partners and our funders, particularly the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, without whom we would be unable to address cross-border issues to the extent that we do.

The Centre's Annual Conference for 2016 – *Bordering Between Unions: What Does the UK Referendum on Europe Mean for Us?* – set the agenda for the first half of the year, leading up to the Referendum on 23 June. We recognised then that a referendum result taking the UK out of the EU would have enormous consequences for everyone living on this island.

Our conference set the shape not only of the Centre's contribution to the pre-Referendum discussions, but for the wider conversation. The Centre was delighted to welcome speakers and attendees from across Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and beyond for what was a thoroughly successful and informative event. Almost half of all those participating were elected representatives and public officials from all levels of government (despite the clash with campaigning for the imminent election in Ireland). Likewise, our speakers brought considerable knowledge and expertise to the conversation: these included Mr Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, Former Irish Ambassador to the UK; Dr Martin Mansergh, Former Minister of State; Dr Mary C Murphy, University College Cork; Mr Humza Yusuf MSP, Minister for Europe and International Development, Scottish Government; and Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mairead McGuinness, MEP. Likewise, panel discussions on the possible socio-economic, legal, political and constitutional implications of a UK withdrawal from the UK were informed by leading academics, politicians and practitioners. (The 2017 Annual Conference, *Building and Maintaining Relationships Within and Across these Islands*, will be in the Armagh City Hotel on 23 and 24 February.)

In partnership with Cooperation Ireland, CCBS produced a series of briefing papers. Commencing with *The UK Referendum on Membership of the EU: What does it mean for Northern Ireland?*, additional briefing papers addressed issues including free movement and citizen mobility, the Human Rights Act, cross-border cooperation, peace-building, regional development, the constitutional issues, citizen mobility issues, EU funding and the wider economic and trade issues. All of the briefing papers and our submissions are available on our website. The CCBS website has been identified by the National Library of Ireland for inclusion in its Web Archive with the aim of preserving Irish websites of scholarly, cultural and political importance. The Library is creating a collection of sites relating to the EU Brexit referendum. It will be made available through the Library's website [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie).

Now that the votes have been counted we continue to face uncertain times; while in 'limbo' waiting for Article 50 to be invoked and during the two years (or possibly more) ahead while the UK government negotiates its departure. Certainly, the potential impacts will be enormous on both sides of the border and it is essential that the voices of everyone living on the island of Ireland – irrespective of whether they are citizens of the UK, Ireland, the EU or elsewhere – are heard, their concerns respected and their interests protected as negotiations proceed.

Following the vote and throughout the second half of 2016, the Centre's activities have thus been dominated by 'Brexit'. CCBS has responded to numerous requests from a range of media and press outlets as well as invitations to speak at seminars and conferences. The Centre and a number of other organisations involved in cross-border cooperation in the Irish Border Region came together in September to discuss the challenges for cross-border cooperation in the context of the recent referendum decision. We are concerned that the commitments for cross-border cooperation embedded in the Good Friday Agreement should remain a priority for both the UK



and Irish Governments and that the interests of the border region remain central to the deliberations. We will be working collectively to monitor and collect evidence of the impacts on the border region of the referendum decision prior to and after the triggering of Article 50.

In October, the CCBS annual seminar in Brussels, *The Future of Cross-Border Cooperation: on the island of Ireland, between the island and Great Britain, and beyond* provided a vital opportunity to debate how cross-border cooperation can continue to contribute to the socio-economic development of border regions in the wake of the Referendum. In addition, CCBS has made submissions to the House of Lords and Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Inquiries and to the Joint Oireachtas Good Friday Agreement Implementation Committee and the Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Committee. CCBS also joined with others in the Taoiseach's All-Island Civic Dialogue event in November.

While the shadow of Brexit looms over us, nevertheless, other work continued throughout the year. The Border People project, while no longer giving advice directly to cross-border commuters and other individuals, improved our online access, resulting in almost 76,000 visitors to the website and almost 140,000 page views (incidentally, the number of visitors on 24 June was double the previous daily averages earlier in the month). More than 35 citizen advisors have participated in Border People training events this year, ensuring that cross-border knowledge is embedded into mainstream advice sectors, resulting in improved services delivered to citizens. Border People continues to provide direct support to mainstream advisors dealing with cross-border enquiries. As a result, in 2016 citizens' access to specialist advice on complex cross-border issues has increased – approximately 300 issues have been dealt with by the Centre and a further 3,500 cross-border issues have been logged by the advice networks. As noted above, Border People data was used to inform our briefing paper on Free Movement and the project continues to be an invaluable source of evidence on the continuing problems faced by cross-border commuters that CCBS is able to share with policy- and decision-makers.

In June we published a key piece of research, led by CCBS Deputy Director, Anthony Soares – *A study of cross-border flows within the agri-food sector* – offering a detailed analytical snapshot of cross-border activity within the agri-food sector, focusing on small-scale enterprises in four border counties. The research can be used to inform future strategic planning within the agri-food sector on both sides of the border, strengthening the future policy development, stimulating informed dialogue and debate between policy makers and industry representatives, and facilitating innovative approaches to evolving the sector within an increasingly competitive global market place. This research was funded by the Irish Government's Reconciliation Fund, as part of our George Quigley Memorial Initiative. Coinciding with the launch of the research in June, the first annual George Quigley Memorial Lecture, delivered by Dr Frances Ruane, explored the importance of competitiveness for the two open economies on the island

of Ireland and the process whereby both parts of the island are benchmarking their competitiveness performances to those of their global competitors.

CCBS and Armagh Public Library jointly hosted a lecture by Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop and Primate of All Ireland (Church of Ireland), whose topic was *The Stranger at the Gate* on 25 May. In his address, the Archbishop examined what should be our response to the refugee crisis and concluded that the greatest challenge is to our generosity of spirit, quoting Primo Levi, "If we can relieve torment and do not, we become tormentors ourselves."

Reflecting the theme of remembrance, CCBS once again hosted a lecture at the John Hewitt Summer School in July. Contributing to the conversations around the island of Ireland's theme for this year, *A Role in History: the Rising, the Great War and a Shared Past*, Catriona Crowe, Head of Special Projects at the National Archives of Ireland presented the CCBS-sponsored lecture, *How have we remembered 1916?* Reflecting that she had warned in 2012 that the decade of commemorations is "capable of all kinds of uses, abuses, interpretations, misinterpretations, illuminations, mischiefs, sublime new understandings and ancient bad tempers", Catriona concluded that "on balance we have had more sublime new understandings than ancient bad tempers" over the past four years.

Our final public lecture for 2016 coincides with the launch of this *Journal*, on 22 November in Belfast and 24 November in Dublin. Expanding on his article that appears here, Chuck Matthews will describe the political and operational intersection of cross-border collaboration that impacts upon the wellbeing of the diverse populations that live and work in the US-Mexico border region, share examples of some successful cross-border collaborative programmes and structures that are having an impact in the region and provide some insights into approaches and programmes in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region that could be implemented in the US-Mexico border region.

Deputy Director Anthony Soares is also leading on an action research project, *Towards a New Common Chapter*, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, phase one of which concludes in December 2016 (we anticipate a second phase commencing 2017). CCBS is working with civil society organisations from both sides of the border – involving in particular, the active participation of women and Protestant community organisations – to produce a New Common Chapter that voices the needs of civil society. This work will result in informed and motivated community organisations on the island of Ireland who are able to engage with policies and policy-makers on the value of cross-border cooperation and ensuring that it addresses the needs of civic society. CCBS expects that this project will help to create the conditions at community level for independent engagement in cross-border initiatives.

CCBS has also been actively engaged in an EU DG REGIO Cross-Border Review project that is examining the administrative and legal obstacles that persist along EU internal

borders. This initiative is structured around three pillars: a study to provide an inventory of critical border obstacles together with examples of how these have been addressed on certain borders; an extensive public consultation; and four workshops bringing together experts from various DGs of the European Commission and from 13 different Member States. CCBS Director, Ruth Taillon, is a member of this expert group. CCBS also submitted two written responses to the public consultation exercise, one of which was based on the practical experience of the Border People project and focused on barriers to cross-border mobility. We additionally submitted a comprehensive bibliography of resources and additional information on cross-border obstacles and good practice between the probation services in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The CCBS Director is also a member of the Oversight Group of Ireland's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-2018). The Oversight Group is engaged in the regular and systematic reporting and review of progress on achieving stated objectives, actions and targets and revision of these actions and targets in light of emerging issues and policy agendas in relation to women, peace and security, and in response to lessons learned and challenges identified in the monitoring process. The Group works with the appropriate Oireachtas committees to ensure involvement by parliamentarians in monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan and will ensure regular dissemination of updates to wider communities of stakeholders and make sure, in particular, that the perspectives of women affected by conflict are incorporated into the ongoing work of the Oversight Group. At the request of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ruth Taillon made a presentation in February about UNSCR 1325 and the Irish National Action Plan to participants in the Shades Negotiation Program, "a unique platform for negotiation and leadership training and practice engaging promising mid-career men and women in the Middle East".

The cross-border project team supporting the Northern Ireland Executive's Higher Education Strategy is chaired by Ruth Taillon. Previously under the auspices of the Department of Education and Learning, the team has recently been reconvened under the auspices of the new Northern Ireland Department of the Economy. CCBS also made a submission to the Northern Ireland Executive's Consultation on the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021.

CCBS is working also with our founding universities – Queen's University Belfast and Dublin City University – to maximise the potential mutual benefits of our relationships. In recent months, this has been principally focused through both institutions' membership of the North-South Social Innovation Network Steering Committee convened by CCBS. This initiative has now secured the additional engagement of Ulster University and Dundalk Institute of Technology. The official launch of the North-South Social Innovation Network took place on 2 November 2016, during the conference *Social Innovation: from the Lagan to the Liffey*. CCBS has also been involved in assisting QUB in its efforts to improve engagement with NGOs, and Anthony Soares has been liaising

with CCBS Board member, Dr Katy Hayward, on the work of a QUB Policy Forum in relation to Brexit.

An important element of the Centre's work (and a valuable funding stream) is our support to cross-border networks, Universities Ireland, comprised of the 10 universities on the island; and the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS). CCBS provides secretariat services to both.

In September, President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins launched the digitised versions of the 1916 leaders' courts martial, copies of which have been purchased – with funding from Universities Ireland – from The National Archives in London, to be placed online, free to access, at the Irish National Archives' website. Since 2012, the Centre has worked with the Universities Ireland Historians Group to organise annual conferences on the theme, *1912-1923 Reflecting on a decade of War and Revolution in Ireland*. This year's conference, *Historians on 1916*, held in Dublin's Mansion House on 22 October, attracted an enthusiastic audience of 180 people. The conference brought together historians as practitioners to reflect on what has passed in this monumental year of commemoration and featured addresses from leading historians from across Ireland and Britain.

A second important strand of Universities Ireland's work is its role as the Irish section of Scholars at Risk (SAR). Scholars at Risk is an international network of higher education institutions dedicated to protecting threatened scholars, preventing attacks on higher education communities and promoting academic freedom worldwide. In April, with support from the SAR Ireland coordinating committee, we organised a SAR Regional Tour for Dr Rezvan Moghaddam, a women's rights activist and researcher who has been closely involved in the women's movement in Iran since 1979. President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins will again be the guest of honour at a SAR event at Trinity College on 29 November. This event will bring together students, faculty staff and members of the public from across the island to hear from one of the many scholars now in exile in Europe who has been supported through the SAR Network. There will also be presentations from Ms Sinead O'Gorman, European Director, SAR; some of the scholars now working in Irish universities who have received sanctuary and assistance from SAR; and from individuals involved in SAR activities such as the Academic Freedom Monitoring Project in universities north and south.

The Centre for Cross Border Studies also administers the North South Post-Graduate Scholarship and History Bursaries schemes on behalf of Universities Ireland.

SCoTENS is a network of 37 colleges of education, university education departments, teaching councils, curriculum councils, education trade unions and education centres on the island of Ireland with a responsibility for and interest in teacher education. CCBS administers the SCoTENS Seed Funding Programme that promotes and funds a range of research-based initiatives with a view to establishing sustainable North-South

partnerships and projects. In 2016, thirteen projects received a combined allocation of £50,000. The Centre also organises the annual North South Teacher Exchange with higher education institutions that offer programmes of Initial Teacher Education. This project brings student teachers from Dublin to do a key part of their assessed teaching practice in Belfast schools, and Belfast student teachers to do the same in Dublin.

The SCoTENS annual conference is a key fixture in the education calendar on the island of Ireland. The annual SCoTENS conference provides a forum where teacher educators across the island of Ireland can engage in open, critical and constructive analysis of current issues in education with a view to promoting a collaborative response to these issues. The October 2016 SCoTENS conference, *Communities of practice: Learning together to teach together*, was on the theme of teachers' collaborative learning. Keynote speakers were educational theorist and practitioner Prof Etienne Wenger and Dr Graham Donaldson, former Chief Executive of HM Inspectorate of Education and current President of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates.

# Introduction

**Ruth Taillon, CCBS Director**



This issue of the Journal is dedicated to the memory of our former Board member, Ann McGeeney and CCBS Chair, Helen Johnston reflects in her *Foreword* on Ann's contribution over many years to challenging poverty and disadvantage – particularly in the border region – and her valuable work in supporting peacebuilding initiatives, particularly with grassroots communities in Ireland, but also on a wider international context (she travelled in her role with the Cadbury Trust to Palestine and elsewhere). We are pleased to publish here Kathy Walsh's personal tribute to Ann, "cross-border peacebuilder". Kathy, who was Ann's close personal friend and colleague, writes evocatively about Ann's approach to working with border communities and her strong commitment to social justice. Kathy's article also provides information about the Ann McGeeney Trust Fund, managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland. The Centre for Cross Border Studies is honoured to cooperate with the Trust by providing administrative support to the new Ann McGeeney Awards for peacebuilding and cross-border cooperation. These new Awards will be launched alongside the 2016 *Journal of Cross Border Studies* in Ireland and the Awards presented annually at future *Journal* launches.

In her Foreword, Helen Johnston has outlined the Centre's activities over the past year. As was also the case in much of 2015, our work programme in the first half of 2016 was focused on addressing the issues raised by the (then) forthcoming Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. In the second half of the year, it has been dominated by the many issues raised by the decision to Leave and its immediate and future impacts for the island of Ireland. Mary C Murphy's article offers a comprehensive overview of both the context in which the referendum took place, and the campaign in the different parts of the UK, with particular focus on Northern Ireland. She discusses the referendum result and the response to the vote to Leave in the immediate aftermath and overtime; again looking closely how this has developed (or not) in Northern Ireland. Dr Murphy concludes that the referendum outcome and aftermath "have revealed a myriad of challenges and complexities, dilemmas and difficulties for the UK in negotiating its exit from the EU and in agreeing its future relationship with the EU." She notes that it is not clear whether the Prime Minister, her cabinet or Whitehall "are overly exercised by specific Northern Ireland issues and concerns." Brexit, she states, "may prove to be one of Northern Ireland's biggest tests since the introduction of devolved power."

This issue includes two case studies that offer examples of cross-border cooperation across EU borders. Dr Jordi Gomez, writes about obstacles to cooperation on the Franco-Spanish border, and Marek Olszewski offers a reflection on the benefits and challenges for cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion. Although in the wake of the referendum, it is not clear whether the models for institutionalising

cross-border cooperation – European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, Euroregions and Eurodistricts – have any potential for the Ireland/Northern Ireland border region, both provide interesting analyses. Marek Olszewski describes some of the difficulties encountered by cross-border actors on the Poland-Czech-Slovak borders and also how the benefits of cooperation are understood differently in the popular and official perceptions in each jurisdiction. Jordi Gomez discusses how in the Pyrénées-Orientales, a multitude of diverse cross-border cooperation projects has contributed to an increased sense of a unified cultural and political Catalan region. He concludes, however, that cross-border cooperation “appears ultimately to be marked by fragility” and “a complexity exists ... which leads to a form of precariousness and instability which affects the projects.”

Chuck Matthews and his co-authors offer the results of a study about the factors that are important in leading cross-border cooperation, based on a survey of 100 cross-border leaders and actors involved in cross-border collaboration in health care in the USA-Mexico border region. He notes that there are “hundreds of people and organisations working to protect and improve the health of the region” which “exhibits substantial health and economic disparities.” They suggest that cross-border collaborations may reduce health disparities in border regions, with leadership being a key to the success of any cross-border collaborative effort. The research found that cross-border health leaders in both the USA and Mexico agree on the collaborative leadership approaches needed to impact on the wellbeing of their border region. Chuck Matthews notes also that their findings “align with and support significant reports and/or operational toolkits produced in Europe”. He references (the CCBS-produced) *PAT-TEIN Toolkit for Inter-Cultural/Cross-Border Project Management* and also Cooperation and Working Together’s publication, *Cooperation and Working Together for health gain and social wellbeing*.

The final two articles provide insights into challenges closer to home. Caroline Creamer and Dr Niall Blair draw on their work with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) to consider how to address the perennial challenges around the sustainable development of small towns and villages across the island of Ireland. They note that there are “significant opportunities in the assets available to rural communities which can support sustainable development.” However, harnessing the potential of these assets and achieving economic recovery locally and island-wide “will require a concerted effort not only from central, regional and local government but also community partnerships, rural enterprises, and national and regional (including cross-border) agencies with a rural development remit.” They consider the evolving policy environment and the distinctive characteristics of the Irish border region. There are, they note, already signs that small towns and villages in the border region will be most adversely affected by Brexit. The referendum has raised questions not only about future free movement and trade, but also for healthcare, education and shared emergency services, making even more important the need to find new approaches to regeneration.

Andrew McClelland's paper introduces the REINVENT research project focussed on the management of heritage in the cross-border cultural landscape of Derry/Londonderry. He discusses the importance of facilitating dialogue over cultural heritage to the maintenance of 'thin' borders in contested cross-border contexts. The paper starts with a reflection on how the Brexit debate has "starkly revealed the distance and mistrust between people and the political establishment, exposing suspicions of expert knowledge while confirming societal differences ...". He places his analysis also in the context of the impact of the 'refugee crisis' on public policies leading to the reintroduction of border controls and de facto suspension of the Dublin Regulation about asylum seekers. Not unrelated, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, is the current focus on the possible return of a 'hard' border here. "... borders and boundaries are firmly back on the political agenda in spite of (or because of) their increasing invisibility due to globalisation, European integration, and, more locally, the Northern Ireland Peace Process." He notes that while the permeability of European borders has improved in recent decades, this has been largely a result of top-down processes; in contested border regions, where difficult questions of heritage and identity are frequently to the fore, the negotiation of 'new relational geographies' is important. Furthering cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland and maintaining the 'thinness' of the border requires that policymakers pay attention to the management of cultural heritage.

We offer here a number of reviews of books related to borders and their definition and how they are experienced by the people who live with and cross them. At a time of increasing focus on Russia's role as a global actor, we offer two perspectives – from Finland and Russia – on the same book, *The EU-Russia Borderlands: New contexts for regional cooperation*. (The editor confesses that this was by chance rather than design with reviews inadvertently being commissioned from both Virpi Kaisto and Katerina Mikhailova. We print them both here with apologies to Virpi and Katerina for the confusion.)

CCBS Research Assistant, Martin McTaggart reviews Cathal McCall's *The European Union and Peacebuilding: the cross-border dimension* and Dr Cathal McCall reviews a collection of essays emerging from the Borderscaping project, relating to security and border, *Borderscaping: Imaginations and practices of border-making*, "a path-breaking and stimulating book on the imaginations and practices of border making and border transcending." A much less favourable review of *Spaces and Identities in Border Regions* has been provided by Dr Katy Hayward, who comments that "sales will surely depend on the number of Foucauldian border scholars in Luxembourg and its immediate neighbours" and that few non-academics will find the book either illuminating or useful. You have been warned.

Annmairie O'Kane, CCBS Information Manager, provides an assessment of *Piecing Together Europe's Citizenship: Searching for Cinderella*, which explores the question, "What is European citizenship?" by means of guidelines on European citizens' rights, involvement and trust. Michael Farrell begins his review of *Justice in the EU: The*



*emergence of transnational solidarity* by noting that with the EU facing an existential crisis, "it may not seem the best time to discuss the development of solidarity in Europe and how the EU can contribute more fully to securing social justice." In this book the author seeks to examine the theoretical basis for solidarity or social justice in EU legislation and in the decisions of the EU Court of Justice. It is, Michael Farrell suggests, a useful contribution to the discussion that is needed around this issue.

## Ann McGeeney: Cross-border peace builder

Kathy Walsh



*I had been out of the country for almost 10 years, when I first met Ann McGeeney across a desk. At that time Ann (with Paddy McGinn) was the Joint Manager of the Area Development Management Ltd/Combat Poverty Agency's Peace and Reconciliation Programme, and they were interviewing me for a job based in Monaghan. Their questions were probing and their passion for what they were doing was palpable. It was one of those really tough but enjoyable interviews. Listening to them speak I was very conscious of how little I knew of the border, while Ann and Paddy were clearly border people, and the region a place apart. To my great pleasure, they offered me the job. As a new resident in the area I had an awful lot to learn; from the practical, (such as where was the best place to buy diesel), to the professional, (such as whom did I need to speak to about a particular project or group). And so I started asking questions, lots and lots of questions, of all of my colleagues and of Ann in particular. She was always patient, generous with her knowledge and her connections. On the rare occasions when she couldn't help out, she invariably knew someone, who would know someone, who might be able to help.*

My opening line on calling one of Ann's connections was: "Ann McGeeney suggested that I talk to you", and the response I got, while often a little wary (not surprising, given my soft southern accent), went along the lines of a helpful "So what can I do for you?" Ann also gave the best directions, particularly in rural areas along the border. I later learnt that she knew those roads like the back of her hand, having criss-crossed them in her teenage years to get to Dundalk, Castleblayney and Carrickmacross, following Horslips wherever they played.

And so it was that Ann became my 'go-to-woman' when something needed to be done on a peacebuilding or cross-border topic. Over time I realised that Ann was not just my 'go-to-woman', she played that role to innumerable people, which was how throughout the years she found herself invited onto the boards of many community organisations, including the Rural Community Network, an organisation that was very close to her rural heart.

Ann was proud to be a farmer's daughter, coming from Cornonagh near Crossmaglen, a place where many generations of her family had farmed the land and lived a border life. In 1999, when Ann was asked to reflect on what the Border meant to her, she wrote about how she had been brought up on stories about big Annie (her grandmother) cycling every Monday to Dundalk's street fair to sell her butter and eggs; at a time

when trading that direction across the border was to her advantage. And then later, when trade favoured the eggs and butter moving the other direction, how Ann's mum and her sisters collected the butter and eggs from an ageing cousin across the border and traded them other way.

I like to think that Ann inherited her cross-border ingenuity and acute savviness from her grandmother, her mum and her aunts. She knew her way around people, she went quietly about her work; it was never about her, it was about the work, and most importantly, it was about making a positive difference. She always went out to people. She never expected them to come to her. When she met them she would work hard to find common ground, whether it be the weather, farming or family. It was a lot about the next generation, and striving to make it better for them.



Ann was never naïve – while she was very enthusiastic about the opportunities created by the Good Friday Agreement – she knew that old wounds would take time to heal and that sometimes, unknowingly, it was possible to open a can of worms. She took calculated risks for peace. She was highly adept at being able to make the difficult decisions in terms of when to walk away and when to push; she was simply and quietly masterful.

So it was that Ann went gently about her business. Leaving Monaghan to head to Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT), to head up the first ever Cross-Border Centre for Community Development. Ann was in her element there, fully immersed in cross-border community development. In her role at the Centre she delighted in bringing groups together, helping individuals and groups on both sides of the border make connections in order to get things out into the open and done.



*Ann with husband Jimmy Murray, who now heads the Ann McGeeney Trust.*

Ann left DKIT to work as an independent consultant. At that point, she was very well known and highly respected on both sides of the border. As further endorsement of her abilities, she was sought after by a variety of organisations, large and small, north and south of the border, to come and work with them.

Whatever role Ann played, her approach was both pragmatic and diligent,



always focused on the practical and the achievable. Irrespective of her positions (as Joint Manager, Director and more recently, as a trusted consultant) she regarded her role as a privilege, not an entitlement. She was an incredibly hard worker who, envied by many, also succeeded in making everything she did look effortless. I never failed to be amazed by how much she could manage to fit into a day, juggling her busy work and home lives. Even in the unfortunate event of knowing that her illness was terminal she continued with her work, not wishing to let anyone down. She was in Leitrim for a meeting about funding peace-building projects only a couple of weeks before she died.

Ann was modest to a fault. She never sought recognition or praise for the work she did, yet undoubtedly played a central role in building peace and making cross-

border connections develop and bear fruit. Her view was that for too long individuals and groups along the northern side of the border had looked to Belfast and individuals and groups along the southern side had looked to Dublin. Ann believed that it was time for individuals and groups along the border simply to turn to face one another and look at what they could do together to better their situations: through business and through cultural and community activities. For me, it was Ann's fundamental decency, understanding and respect for the views of others, aided by her quiet but strong determination to do everything possible to bring people together, that made her a leader at a time where leadership was in short supply.

Ann died before her time and those of us who knew her continue to mourn her passing. For those of you who did not know Ann, you missed a wonderfully warm human being who made a very significant contribution to the restoration of peace in the borderlands on the island of Ireland.

Ann was a role model for many of us who work cross-border – an open, understanding, and humble person who went about her work quietly and who made a difference to many groups on both sides of the border. She showed us that it is all about making a positive and selfless contribution, being in the service of others and doing small things that really can make a big difference.

Following Ann's passing, her family and friends decided to set up a Trust in her name, and so the Ann McGeeney Trust Fund was born and the fundraising began. The Fund

operates in keeping with Ann's principles and life. It offers small one-off grants to:

- Support community groups to build peace across and within communities and to establish cross-border contacts;
- Support women and women's groups seeking to make a positive difference to their lives and the lives of others;
- Support minority groups, both indigenous and those newly arrived in Ireland.

The Fund is being managed by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland on behalf of the Trust.

If you are interested in contributing to the Fund or indeed running a fundraising event for the Trust please **email: [jimmymurray56@hotmail.com](mailto:jimmymurray56@hotmail.com)**

Donations can be made at

**<https://localgiving.org/charity/annmcgeeneytrust/>**

If you or indeed someone you know is interested in accessing support from the Fund, a short expression of interest form can be downloaded from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland website at:

**[www.community foundationni.org](http://www.communityfoundationni.org)**

**DR KATHY WALSH** is an independent evaluator and researcher. Kathy has, among many specialist areas, an extensive knowledge and experience of social and cultural change issues. Key relevant pieces of work include evaluations of various Peace Programme funded initiatives, as well as studies of the needs of older people, survivors of torture, older people who are homeless, as well as cancer survivors and individuals dealing with dying and death. Kathy works for a wide variety of organisations that include: NGOs and community and voluntary organisations, government departments and public agencies. In the past, Kathy held the posts of Research Co-ordinator for the Programme for Peace & Reconciliation, and Development Officer with Highland Council in Scotland.

# Northern Ireland and the EU Referendum: The outcome, options and opportunities

Dr Mary C Murphy



## Introduction

*The result of the UK EU referendum in June 2016 produced a surprising result. Contrary to expectations, the Leave side won, although the margin of the victory was small. Fifty-two per cent of the UK electorate chose to leave with 48% opting to remain. The outcome of the referendum has revealed the existence of marked political, ideological, socio-economic, demographic and geographic divisions across the UK. The latter division may be the most significant. In contrast to other parts of the UK, Scotland, Northern Ireland and London voted to Remain. At 56%, the margin of the Remain victory is a few percentage points lower in Northern Ireland than in these other regions. Arguably however, the implications of the overall Leave vote are more profound for Northern Ireland than for any other part of the UK, and by extension the result is similarly problematic for the Republic of Ireland.*

*The Northern Ireland electorate expressed a majority vote to Remain which is at odds with the overall UK vote. The breakdown of the Northern Ireland vote suggests some overlap between unionist and nationalist voters in terms of a preference for the UK to stay in the EU. Critically however, the two parties to the Northern Ireland Executive, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin, do not share the same view on the Brexit issue. In this context, the capacity of the Northern Ireland administration to contribute to UK exit negotiations and to agitate effectively for Northern Ireland's best interests remain under-developed. In the aftermath of the referendum, Northern Ireland is potentially vulnerable, both economically and politically, to an exit process which may not take account of the intricacies and sensitivities of the Northern Ireland situation.*

*This article examines the EU referendum campaign and result in Northern Ireland. It documents the reaction and response in the aftermath of the vote, and analyses the immediate priorities for Northern Ireland in defending and promoting the best interests of the region without destabilising a delicate political and economic situation.*

## The Referendum Context

The UK has had a difficult and often strained relationship with the EU. Writing in 1990, Stephen George characterised the UK as an 'awkward partner' in Europe, a label which

is regarded as broadly accurate. The UK's journey to EU membership was protracted. Initially uninterested in joining the then European Economic Community (EEC), the UK eventually acceded to the Community in 1973 along with the Republic of Ireland and Denmark. The UK has long grappled with aspects of EU membership, including its impact on national sovereignty and identity. The British period of membership has been shaped by 'its exceptionalism, its Euroscepticism and by the extent and lack of knowledge of its Europeanisation' (Cini and Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, 2016, p. 1). Since the 2000s, popular objections to the EU have been championed by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) which has long advocated for the UK to leave the EU. The party's electoral strength was initially limited, but its fortunes changed and during the period of David Cameron's leadership of the Conservative Party, UKIP scored electoral gains at European, national and local levels. These successes constituted a direct challenge to the Tory Party which was itself divided on the question of Europe. In his 2013 Bloomberg speech, Cameron set out his vision for the EU and for the UK's place in it. He also committed to negotiating a new settlement for the UK in the EU and he pledged to hold a referendum on EU membership following the 2015 general election. Following the Conservative Party victory in 2015, a proposed UK-EU settlement was outlined in a letter from European Council President, Donald Tusk, to the UK Prime Minister in February 2016. Four key areas of reform were highlighted: economic governance; competitiveness; sovereignty; and free movement and access to social benefits. Cameron reacted positively to the proposed reforms and guarantees, and vowed to campaign for the UK to remain in the EU. The referendum date was set for 23 June 2016.

Northern Ireland had traditionally enjoyed a more harmonious relationship with the EU than the UK as a whole. Initially, support for UK membership of the EU was muted. During the first two decades of membership, Northern Ireland was distracted by other more pressing constitutional and security issues, and in that context was somewhat detached from EU politics. The evolving peace process, the 1994 ceasefires, the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement and the subsequent introduction of devolution altered Northern Ireland's constitutional status within the UK and also impacted on Northern Ireland's engagement with the EU. The newly installed cross-community Assembly and Executive were charged with managing key areas of public policy, including many with an EU dimension. The EU also committed financial resources to Northern Ireland in the form of the Peace programmes (from 1995) to support the evolving and often fragile peace process. In addition, the EU created the Northern Ireland EU Taskforce, a novel initiative designed to support local civil servants in their interactions with EU services and institutions. Attitudes to the EU in Northern Ireland have typically been positive and support for the Union tends to be influenced by its financial largesse. Importantly however, where issues of 'high politics' are concerned, such as the broader UK relationship with the EU and all that entails for British sovereignty and identity, discord is present and it often reflects the communal divide. Nevertheless, the depth of Euroscepticism in Northern Ireland is not as pronounced or as vitriolic as elsewhere. The contrasting EU referendum campaigns in Northern Ireland and across the UK provide ample evidence of the differing territorial outlooks and perspectives on Europe.

### The Referendum Campaign

The EU referendum campaign differed markedly across the UK. In fact, it is possible to discern a variety of different campaigns taking place simultaneously in the run up to the referendum. Across England, the campaign was focused heavily on immigration, and the slogan 'take back control' was synonymous with Eurosceptics and those advocating for Leave. The English campaign was also punctured by allegations that David Cameron and the Remain side were conducting 'Project Fear' in an attempt to frighten voters into choosing Remain. David Cameron's cabinet members were freed to campaign on either side and the ensuing political rancor, rather than the substance of key issues, fueled much of the debate. This produced a largely misinformed, misleading and often nasty narrative: 'During the referendum campaign, sneering and attack replaced interrogation and information' (Seaton 2016, p. 334).

Scotland's campaign was decidedly less acrimonious. The case for Remain was led by First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, who was supported by a cohesive and united Scottish National Party (SNP), while the Labour Party was also pro-Remain. Support for the EU in Scotland has always been strong. A vocal Scottish Parliament and Executive have been proactive in promoting Scottish-EU interests. Having previously grappled with constitutional questions during the earlier Independence Referendum in 2014, Scotland was better equipped to consider issues central to the EU referendum. This produced a campaign and debate which were more structured and less hostile (Minto et al. 2016, p. 184):

As the EU dimension had formed part of the Scottish independence referendum debate, the public, media and political parties were aware and prepared to enter debates on Brexit and to consider the possible implications of a UK vote to leave, including a new referendum on Scottish independence'.

In Northern Ireland, the referendum campaign was lackluster, limited in depth and late to develop. The EU referendum largely failed to capture the public imagination as political parties shied away from engaging robustly with challenging political questions about the UK's constitutional future.

Voters take their cues from political parties, and in Northern Ireland political parties have traditionally displayed differing perspectives on the EU. Nationalists are more supportive of the European integration project than unionists. The nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) has always been the most Europhile of Northern Ireland's political parties. The party's former leader, John Hume, was a champion for the EU in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin has historically been more critical of the EU. Their support for the Remain position during the UK EU referendum contrasts with the party's campaigns for 'No' votes in the Irish referendums on the Nice Treaty, Lisbon Treaty and Fiscal Stability Treaty. Both nationalist political parties supported the UK staying in the EU. The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (APNI) and the smaller Green Party also supported the Remain position.



Unionists have typically been Eurosceptic in outlook. The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) has been less opposed to the EU than the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), but both have been openly critical of various aspects of the EU integration project. The DUP opted to campaign for the UK to leave the EU, while the UUP chose to support the Remain position. This support, however, was not universal within the party ranks. Some UUP members expressed reservations about the party strategy and openly challenged the party leadership. On this occasion, the unionist bloc was divided on the question of continued UK membership of the EU.

The majority of Northern Ireland political parties were late to develop their stances. They were also constrained in communicating their positions. These two factors impacted not just on the amount of debate, but also on the quality of debate. The muted nature of the Northern Ireland campaign may have been impacted by the Northern Ireland Assembly elections. The fifth elections to the power-sharing Northern Ireland Assembly took place on 5 May 2016, less than seven weeks before the UK referendum on EU membership. Any expectation that the looming referendum would spark spirited discussion of the EU on the election trail was emphatically quashed. The 2016 election, like those before it, remained resolutely focused on local issues and influenced by old communal rivalries. Discussion of the EU was limited, a situation which endured during the weeks leading up to referendum day. Weary of canvassing and wary of the debate, there was little mobilisation of party activists and few enthusiastic campaigners.

The official Leave and Remain campaigns in Northern Ireland were also late to emerge and their contribution to the overall debate was similarly limited. Indeed, there was no readily identifiable campaign leader and no maverick figures on either the Leave or the Remain side. A lack of political dynamism, however, leaves a space for civil society. Here too however, there was a shortage of proactivity. *EU Debate Northern Ireland*, an initiative of the Centre for Peacebuilding and Democracy, launched in late 2015 produced a briefing paper *To Remain or Leave? – Northern Ireland and the EU Referendum (2015)* which highlighted some of the questions Northern Ireland might confront in seeking to develop a position on Brexit. The project aimed to ‘stimulate through consultation and engagement with stakeholders discussion of the key issues that should inform debate about the consequences of the outcome of this [EU] referendum for Northern Ireland’. Broader civil society engagement was patchy and also late. Some pronouncements from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in Northern Ireland and other economic actors including leading banks, contrast with the obfuscation of, for example, the agricultural industry. The Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU) did not take a position. This was somewhat surprising given that Northern Ireland farmers benefit disproportionately more from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) than their equivalents in other parts of the UK. The inability of farming and other representative organisations to settle on definitive positions and to guide their members accordingly may be construed as a failing of civil society.

The EU referendum campaign in Northern Ireland clearly lacked vigour, however, and perhaps more damagingly, it also lacked information and depth. The precise impact of

a UK departure from the EU on Northern Ireland was not comprehensively investigated, and this was despite a view that Northern Ireland, more so than any other part of the UK, would be worst affected in the event of a vote to leave. A very small number of studies and reports were produced, but these did not penetrate the public consciousness or the mainstream media. The campaign itself was largely conducted through the media and although this is an important and necessary dimension of any referendum, it alone is insufficient in educating and/or motivating voters. The political and constitutional ramifications of the vote were alluded to, but the more detailed policy debate was obscured. The main focus was on the impact of the referendum result on the border, trade, farming, EU funding, and to a lesser extent human rights. Unlike elsewhere in the UK, discussion of immigration was very limited and nor was the appeal to 'take back control' especially evident in Northern Ireland. The Scottish position also provided some food for thought during the Northern Ireland referendum campaign with a number of commentators suggesting that the Scottish result might undermine the unity of the UK, and thus impact on Northern Ireland.

A lack of detail, depth and discussion was not aided by the absence of a clear Northern Ireland position on the referendum question. The Scottish government strongly endorsed continued UK membership of the EU and published *Scotland's Agenda for EU Reform* (2015) by way of input to the broader UK debate. In contrast, the Northern Ireland Executive was unable to articulate a position on the referendum question. Party political differences on a host of EU related policy issues, and a reluctance to debate some of the more fundamental constitutional implications of the referendum debate, meant that the Executive was largely absent from the campaign.

Internal political input may have been muted, but the same cannot be said for external contributions, in particular, input from the Irish government. Dublin strongly supported the UK remaining in the EU. Contributions to this effect from senior Irish figures were regular and prominent. The Dublin government was keen to make its voice heard.

### **The Referendum Result**

The overall UK decision to leave the EU may have been somewhat unexpected. However, the Northern Ireland referendum result was as predicted – a majority of 56% opted to remain. Turnout in Northern Ireland was lower, almost ten percentage points below the average turnout of 72% across the UK. The lower turnout rate in Northern Ireland was influenced by a reduced nationalist turnout rate. Those who might have been expected to vote Remain did not turn out in the same numbers as their unionist counterparts. Average turnout in nationalist constituencies was 60.4% compared with 63.8% in unionist constituencies. The most striking example of low nationalist turnout is the Sinn Féin stronghold of West Belfast where less than 50% of voters voted. This figure is 8% down on the turnout figure for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections a few weeks earlier. It appears that some nationalist voters may have strategically absented themselves from the voting booths in an attempt to force a border poll. Geographically, support for Remain was strongest in Belfast and in border areas, and in constituency

terms, all those with a nationalist MP voted to Remain. Interestingly, three of the ten Northern Ireland constituencies with a Unionist MP also voted to Remain. The size and spread of the Remain vote indicates that this choice enjoyed support from both unionists and nationalists. Indeed, the outcome suggests that the Northern Ireland electorate did not divide entirely along traditional communal lines. According to a Lucidtalk exit poll, 33% of unionists voted Remain. More recent research by Ipsos-Mori suggests that 40% of Protestant voters wanted the UK to stay in the EU (McBride, 2016). In terms of the broader profile of Northern Ireland voters, some trends are in line with those across the UK. Younger voters were more likely to vote Remain and middle-class voters likewise. This distinction between social classes was particularly marked among Protestants with those from a working-class background being much more likely to vote Leave than middle-class Protestant voters, 71% as against 47% (Coakley and McGarry, 2016).

### **The Response to the Referendum Result**

The referendum result was greeted with surprise and shock across the UK, as well as throughout Europe and further afield. In Northern Ireland, the shock was matched by a sense of widespread alarm. Questions immediately began to surface about what precisely the result would mean for Northern Ireland, for the border between North and South, for trade and other relations with the Republic of Ireland, and for access to the single European market. The *Belfast Telegraph* weekend front page captured this anxiety with the headline, 'A step into the unknown' (25 June 2016).

The poor quality of the referendum debate across much of the UK and the reluctance to engage in contingency planning meant that there was a lack of preparedness in terms of knowing how to respond to the result. The limited discourse had not allowed for Brexit strategies to be developed or teased out and so there was something of an initial blankness of response. In Northern Ireland, survey data shows that a majority of Northern Ireland businesses did not plan for a possible Brexit. As the dust settled, the process of adaptation got underway. According to a Chamber of Commerce survey, one in four firms in Northern Ireland have now revised plans for their business as a result of the vote, with the majority likely to pause or freeze growth, investment and recruitment plans. The political response to the vote was interesting. The two parties of the Northern Ireland Executive had different and clashing positions on the EU referendum and in the post-referendum period, those differences persist. However, the DUP and Sinn Féin demonstrated some ability to achieve a unity of approach. Both parties share the view that Northern Ireland must be treated sensitively and they are pressing for special arrangements catering to Northern Ireland's geographic, political and economic situation.

The most visible (and only) example of unity came in the form of a joint letter by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to the UK Prime Minister. The letter outlined key concerns for Northern Ireland and specifically focused on five issues where Northern Ireland interests might be threatened. These included:

1. Status of the land border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland;
2. Competitiveness, EU trade and access to labour;
3. Access to energy;
4. Ability to draw down EU funding;
5. Impact on agri-food and fisheries industry.

The letter requested that the Northern Ireland administration be fully involved and engaged in negotiations between the Irish and UK governments on the question of the border. This outward unity, however, masks a significant chasm between the Executive parties. Sinn Féin ultimately wants Northern Ireland to remain in the EU, whereas the DUP fully supports plans to leave. Echoing a familiar phrase, albeit one with a very different sentiment, Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, advises that in Northern Ireland 'remain must mean remain' (*Irish Times*, 19 August 2016). The party was also quick to call for a border poll, a proposal which has been roundly rejected by other parties and the UK government. In contrast, the DUP is ultimately in favour of UK withdrawal from the EU, despite seeking some concessions for Northern Ireland.

In the aftermath of the referendum, the Executive has been criticised for its inability to agree contingency plans. This criticism became particularly pronounced following revelations that officials in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister had produced a report in May 2015 listing more than 20 ways Brexit may damage Northern Ireland's economy. This report only became public in September 2016 following a Freedom of Information request. The Executive's inability to reach agreement on the document prevented its earlier publication and meant that it did not form part of any substantive contingency plan for Northern Ireland.

Following the referendum result, the Northern Ireland Executive is to take the lead on all Brexit related issues. Unlike Scotland however, no Minister for Brexit has been appointed and there has been no parliamentary inquiry or consultation exercise launched (although the House of Lords EU Committee has launched an inquiry into the impact of Brexit on the relationship between Ireland and the UK). The Department of Finance (Northern Ireland) has been among the more vocal and proactive of Government Departments. It added a tranche of new posts to help deal with the processing of EU funding applications before the Autumn statement deadline. Only applications submitted by this deadline are guaranteed support by the Treasury.<sup>1</sup> This is an immediate and targeted reaction to a pressing financial deadline, rather than constituting a more rounded response to the totality of the Brexit challenge for Northern Ireland.

The cross-border institutions created by the 1998 Belfast Agreement have become a venue for Brexit discussions. The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has facilitated

1 Editor's note: On 3 October, the Chancellor extended this guarantee to the point at which the UK departs the EU. The Chancellor confirmed that the government will guarantee EU funding for structural and investment fund projects, including agri-environment schemes, signed after the Autumn Statement and which continue after the UK has left the EU.

joint action on the part of the Northern Ireland Finance Minister and the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform who have jointly written to the European Commission highlighting their commitment to Peace and Interreg programmes. The British-Irish Council has also been a forum where some discussion of Brexit has taken place and where further dialogue will happen. An extraordinary meeting of the Council took place in Cardiff on 22 July 2016. The summit was convened to discuss the implications of Brexit for the Council and its members and it noted several priority areas including: the economy and trade, the Common Travel Area, relations with the EU and the status of all citizens affected by the change.

Proposals to develop structures for dialogue outside of established institutions has led to some tension between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. An initial Irish government proposal to convene an all-island forum on Brexit was rebuffed by Northern Ireland's First Minister and subsequently shelved. More recently however, the Taoiseach has indicated his intention to revive the idea in the form of a civic dialogue which engages with civic society groups, trade unions, business people, non-governmental organisations and the main political parties on the island of Ireland.

No longer part of the Northern Ireland Executive, the UUP and SDLP have been somewhat more strident in pressing Northern Ireland interests. The UUP produced *A Vision for Northern Ireland outside the EU* which details 10 key 'asks' including financial guarantees for those losing EU funding; safeguards for the Common Travel Area; no 'hard border' at Great Britain's ports and airports; and unfettered access to the EU's single market. The SDLP along with the Alliance Party, Green Party and representatives of the community and voluntary sector have taken a more drastic approach by seeking a judicial review of the Brexit plans. The issues they hope to raise in their challenge include the potential dangers posed to the 1998 Belfast Agreement by a UK exit from the EU. A second legal challenge has also been mounted by Raymond McCord, a Northern Ireland rights activist, who claims it would be unlawful to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty without Parliament first voting on the move. The case is motivated by concerns that EU Peace money that goes towards victims of the Troubles may be discontinued in the aftermath of leaving the EU.

The UK government's representative in Northern Ireland, Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, has also been keen to allay concerns in Northern Ireland. The recently convened Northern Ireland Business Advisory Group first met on 1 September. It is designed to ensure Northern Ireland interests are fully represented during the forthcoming EU exit negotiations and that the voice of business is heard. The inaugural meeting of the group was attended by the Secretary of State and also by David Davis, the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU. It was at this forum that both men spoke about maintaining a soft border between North and South. Brokenshire also plans to meet with other business and community leaders, politicians, and victims and survivors of the Troubles. Much of this dialogue will be conducted simultaneously with fresh political talks aimed at resolving the impasse over dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland's

past. This latter point is important. Political talks in Northern Ireland about sensitive and controversial issues are always difficult. They often reopen old arguments (and wounds) and sometimes they lead to greater entrenchment, rather than compromise and conciliation. Such has been the case with earlier iterations of this dialogue on dealing with the past. There is a reasonable fear that the upcoming talks might derail the fledgling and tenuous unity of purpose on Brexit which is currently on display. Indeed dealing with the past may undermine attempts to deal with the future.

### **Where to Now?**

The outcome of the referendum may not have produced emphatic support for Brexit, but the majority UK decision is for Leave and the newly installed Prime Minister, Theresa May, quickly committed to respecting the vote. Although her pronouncement 'Brexit means Brexit' is categorical, there is nevertheless an ambiguity about precisely what Brexit means, and about how the UK will disengage from the EU. It is clear that neither the UK government, nor the Leave and Remain campaigns had given any serious consideration to the question of managing a possible exit. This is highly problematic and amounts to 'gross negligence' according to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. The Committee's *Equipping the Government for Brexit* report (2016) notes that a lack of contingency planning has: 'exacerbated post-referendum uncertainty both within the UK and amongst key international partners, and made the task now facing the new Government substantially more difficult'.

Two new Government Departments have been established to manage aspects of the Brexit process. The Department for Exiting the European Union (DEEU) is led by David Davis MP, and the Department for International Trade (DIT) is led by Dr Liam Fox MP. The work of both departments will overlap with that of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) which is headed by Boris Johnson MP. Key civil service personnel have also been transferred from across Whitehall to support the work of the new departments. This administrative reshuffling and re-organisation has produced some confusion and concern as civil servants adjust to new roles and responsibilities against an uncertain policy backdrop.

Aside from these developments, the Government has not articulated a clear 'Brexit plan'. The Prime Minister has convened a cabinet sub-committee to oversee the UK's various negotiations and this committee will be the ultimate decision-making body in relation to the exit process. The sub-committee does not have permanent positions for the Northern Ireland Secretary of State (or his Scottish or Welsh counterparts) and it is mainly composed of Ministers who supported the Leave position. The Prime Minister has made it clear that she favours a bespoke deal for the UK and has ruled out modelling the future UK-EU relationship on the Swiss or Norwegian template. However, what precisely this bespoke deal might look like remains uncertain. This ambiguity has led to some frustration both within the UK, among other EU member states, and at the EU level. Impatience with the UK has caused some member states to ratchet up the rhetoric about what the UK can and cannot expect during the exit negotiations. This opaque and

ambiguous picture contributes to political and economic inertia as key actors await the detail of the UK Brexit deal.

Northern Ireland's vote to remain in the EU does not align with the overall UK vote. This discrepancy has led to calls for Northern Ireland's democratic preference to be respected. There is some justification for such appeals. Being the only territory of the EU (bar Gibraltar) which shares a land border with the EU, Northern Ireland will likely face the worst consequences of Brexit, whatever form it takes.<sup>2</sup> The economic and political ramifications are likely to be negative and possibly severe. The Prime Minister has – unsurprisingly – ruled out any asymmetrical approach to the UK exit process, but she has committed to giving consideration to the specific needs and interests of particular parts of the UK. The Minister for Finance, Martin O'Muilleoir, however, claims that Northern Ireland is being left out of post-Brexit negotiations and that decisions about, for example, the future of Peace and Interreg programmes are being made in London without Northern Ireland involvement. The Minister has been outspokenly critical of Whitehall and the UK government. In truth, Northern Ireland is not a priority for a UK government embarking on a complex and challenging series of negotiations. Theresa May's address to the Conservative Party conference in October 2016 implicitly suggests so. The Prime Minister hinted at a hard Brexit insofar as she intends to prioritise border controls over single market access. For Northern Ireland, this may entail the re-imposition of a more visible border with the Republic of Ireland, a situation which is broadly regarded as economically damaging and also politically problematic. In the same speech, the Prime Minister advised that she will trigger Article 50 by the end of March 2017, a move which will effectively begin exit talks. Elements of the Brexit framework and process are slowly beginning to emerge.

Northern Ireland faces a number of challenges in terms of participating and contributing to the negotiation processes. First of all, Northern Ireland has to identify and define its vital interests. There are, however, a number of challenges here, and the primary one is to know what those interests are. To some extent, an agreed synopsis of Northern Ireland's key interests are contained in the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's letter to the Prime Minister in August 2016. The letter, however, contained only 'initial thoughts'. To effectively pursue these issues and interests requires much greater depth, detail and substance. Data and evidence-based analysis are vital to constructing and presenting the Northern Ireland case. Engaging with legal, economic and policy expertise is critical. This (technical) approach may also help to diminish existing Brexit-related tensions between Northern Ireland's political parties by facilitating a *pragmatic* outlook and position which is designed to protect Northern Ireland sectoral interests as a whole.

The May 2015 OFMDFM (now the Executive Office) Report, *Preliminary Analysis on the Impact of a UK Referendum on the European Union* includes a sobering assessment

2 The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) recently repeated its warning that the Northern Ireland economy would be worst hit by the UK's split from the European Union (see *Irish Independent*, 21 September 2016).

of the impact of Brexit on the UK and Northern Ireland. However, as noted above, the report was not made public prior to the referendum and the Northern Ireland Executive did not discuss its contents.<sup>3</sup> The under-use of civil service expertise and insight is regrettable. The European Policy Coordination Unit (EPCU) in the Executive Office has grown and developed since the early years of devolved power. The unit now has bases in Belfast and Brussels, namely the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels (ONIEB), an elevated number of staff and a more strategic and forward looking outlook. It is well placed to both articulate and represent Northern Ireland interests, but if can only do so with political support and approval. Moreover, given the uniqueness of Northern Ireland's power-sharing structures that support must be cross-party based, and this is where the key problem lies. So far, political disagreement has restricted the Northern Ireland response. As the Brexit process develops, however, overcoming political difference and finding ways to deal pragmatically with various challenges becomes more urgent and pressing.

Identifying key interests is not just confined to the Northern Ireland Executive. Other features of the broader political system and civil society can contribute and influence. In the run-up to the referendum in Northern Ireland, the debate suffered from a lack of broader societal input. It would be a missed opportunity were this to happen post-referendum. EUdebateNI (2016) has produced an important document post-referendum which details options for a new relationship between the UK and the EU, and which identifies some of the issues which Northern Ireland needs to consider in the context of the exit process. These issues touch on nearly all facets of public policy and warrant attention by those sectors and interest groups which will ultimately be affected by an altered UK-EU relationship. There is some onus here again on the Northern Ireland administration to construct a forum (or fora) where these voices can be heard and listened to. The Northern Ireland Assembly, and in particular its committees, are an important access point for civil society actors. Facilitating contributions to parliamentary inquiries, evidence to committees, and direct dialogue with policy-makers by various sectoral interests is an important means of building and legitimising a Northern Ireland Brexit strategy. More open forums in the form of seminars/conferences, consultation exercises and targeted collaboration with key interest groups are other means of ensuring broad input from wider society.

The UK government will lead both the exit talks' process and the negotiations creating a new UK-EU relationship, but there is little clarity about how the devolved regions will feed into UK strategising. Given the composition of the cabinet sub-committee on Brexit, Northern Ireland cannot rely on its Secretary of State to have strong influence or input. Existing formal institutional mechanisms for intergovernmental dialogue include the Joint Ministerial Committee (EU) and the British-Irish Council. However, in the past, these have not always proved effective. Indeed previous experience has demonstrated

3 Some preparations, however, are underway. A report identifying the capacity and resource needs of the Northern Ireland civil service in respect of preparations for withdrawal from the EU has been produced and has been discussed by the Committee for the Executive Office.



that, on occasion, Northern Ireland interests have been overlooked. Sometimes this may be intentional when Northern Ireland interests do not coincide with the wider UK policy agenda, for example CAP reform. But in other instances, Northern Ireland has been overlooked due to a lack of awareness of Northern Ireland interests in London. The existence of effective (not token) intergovernmental structures is therefore essential. It is in the interests of the Northern Ireland administration, and the other devolved units, that institutions are in place where positions can be articulated and influence brought to bear through robust, frequent and repeated communication with UK central government and others.

The process of defending Northern Ireland interests is not just confined to the national realm. Northern Ireland has long enjoyed high level (and often enviable) access to EU institutions in Brussels, and many leading EU figures have taken a deep interest in Northern Ireland affairs. The Peace programmes and the Northern Ireland-EU Taskforce have facilitated networking and cultivated relationships between Northern Ireland and Brussels. These now represent an additional avenue for both accessing and communicating information. Similarly, there is merit in engaging with MEPs, especially Northern Ireland MEPs. The Republic of Ireland may also prove to be an important ally for the UK, and for Northern Ireland, during the various talks. The Irish government believes that a soft Brexit is manifestly in the interests of the Republic of Ireland (although it is clear that there exists a sensitive challenge for Ireland in terms of reconciling this preference with a broader commitment to the EU).

## Conclusion

The Northern Ireland relationship with the EU has been different from that of the rest of the UK. The region's history of conflict has been acknowledged by the EU. Support for the peace process has come in the form of targeted financial assistance and practical administrative/technical support from Brussels. Public attitudes towards the EU have also been more positive in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK, and although Euroscepticism exists in Northern Ireland, it is not as widespread or as intense as elsewhere. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern communal differences in Northern Ireland on the question of the EU and EU membership and to some extent these played out during the referendum campaign and vote which returned a Northern Ireland vote to Remain.

The referendum outcome and aftermath have revealed a myriad of challenges and complexities, dilemmas and difficulties for the UK in negotiating its exit from the EU and in agreeing its future relationship with the EU. A key predicament is accommodating political divergence across the UK. While Prime Minister May is working to achieve a full UK departure from the EU, she is doing so against the wishes of a volatile Scottish situation, a divided Northern Ireland electorate, and a reluctant London city. It is not clear that she (or her cabinet or Whitehall) are overly exercised by specific Northern Ireland issues and concerns. This underlines the necessity for the devolved administration to be a strong and united voice for Northern Ireland during what will be

a challenging and difficult period of negotiations. Achieving some degree of consensus and unity in Northern Ireland is invariably problematic. And agreeing a forward strategy when the two leading political parties ultimately aspire to different EU futures will test the cohesion of the Northern Ireland Executive. If the devolved administration can agree and promote a unified position, it will underline the utility and advantage of the power-sharing system. Successfully finding a means to accommodate divergent political positions will mark an important moment in the maturation and stabilisation of Northern Ireland politics. Reaching that point, however, rests on the ability of the administration to adopt a proactive and pragmatic approach, a move which, in turn, demands a measure of political courage. Brexit may prove to be one of Northern Ireland's biggest tests since the introduction of devolved power.

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## Obstacles to Cooperation on the Franco-Spanish border

Dr Jordi Gomez



*The attractiveness of the Pyrénées-Orientales for Catalonia investment and cooperation can be defined by two simultaneous phenomena: the multiplication and diversification of projects undertaken between the two areas and the increasing feeling of mutual membership of a single cultural and political region – defined by both historic and contemporary ties and reinforced by political and social factors. While the local elite on both sides of the border appear drawn toward Catalonia and have a feeling of belonging to this region, more and more institutions have moved to integrate cross-border cooperation into their repertoire. To date, cross-border initiatives have never been so numerous and speeches asserting the ambition to strengthen relations between the two neighbouring communities flow thick and fast from all sides of the political spectrum. In France, the majority of initiatives undertaken by local political leaders are presented to promote a new dynamic for territorial development – directed southward.*

*A quick review of construction projects within the 'Eurodistrict of the cross-border Catalan area' allows us to measure the extent of activity. Local political leaders have been overtly interested in the ambitions and the innovative character of projects within the 'Eurodistrict of the cross-border Catalan area' initiative. The initiative is seen as capable of creating a long-lasting partnership between the Pyrénées-Orientales and Catalonia; unifying ad-hoc activities into a cohesive ongoing initiative.*

### Genesis

In 2005, the 'Casa of the Generalitat' established an office in Perpignan, acting as a de facto 'embassy' of Catalonia. Its role: to organise meetings between Catalan and French organisations and individuals including consular chambers, universities, companies, trade unions, politicians and political activists. These parties were invited to discuss issues stemming from, and propose solutions to, the historic carving up of the Catalan territories brought about by the imposition of a Franco-Spanish border. These discussions revealed the common issues felt by participants and the concept of forming a coalition to promote and face issues to have emerged. Key findings from discussions included the discovery of a low-level of dialogue between the parties involved; leading to each group historically undertaking its own cross-border initiatives and political standpoints without a view to collaboration with others addressing similar issues. The notion of a 'public arena' in which all interactions that seek to problematise and stabilise an issue could be voiced, was therefore developed.

The Generalitat proposed the creation of a 'European eurodistrict' with the aim of "setting-up a project to promote greater territorial cooperation". On 27 July 2007 in Céret (Pyrénées-Orientales, France) 26 north and south Catalan institutions formalised their commitment by signing the *Declaration of intention for the creation of a Eurodistrict of the cross-border Catalan area (ECT)*. The desire to "solve problems experienced by the two populations and territories related to this existence of the border suffered by populations and territories" was also emphasised on this occasion; the negative impact of the border on local populations being thereby clearly underlined. The agreement also specified that the creation of the Eurodistrict should be enshrined within a legal framework: "*our will is, in the medium term, to create a collective inter-institutional body, integrated cooperation endowed with the legal capacity and with the financial autonomy which will lead to cross-border town and country planning in a space which will be marked by the arrival of the TGV*". A steering committee, composed of political and technical divisions, was created with the objective of defining the legal structure of the Eurodistrict and its future goals.

On 21 November 2007, in Girona (Catalonia, Spain), a 'road map for the consolidation of the Eurodistrict' was signed. It confirmed the structure and process of a 'European grouping of territorial cooperation' (EGTC) endowed with the 'legal entity'. Meanwhile, the number of interested parties involved decreased from 26 to 20. It would then take several months for the 'technical commission' to draft a convention and status of the EGTC: validated on 27 November 2009 during the steering committee's final meeting in Figueres (Catalonia, Spain). Two months later, and according to the procedural constitution of an EGTC, documents were delivered to France and Spain for validation.

### **Explicit interests**

There are many factors involved in the development of the EGTC: yet, they can be summarized into three core areas:

1. Create a forum of exchanges and discussions. Bringing the conversations on both sides of the border related to common interests and development into a single forum allows better understanding of the perspectives and operational functions of each respective region. The aim is to promote dialogue at a social and economic level so that all parties collaborate more.
2. Build a 'cross-border dynamic zone'. Notable activities in this area include: stimulate a common economic development, support employment opportunities on both sides of the border, create transport links, support the creation of the cross-border media, counsel and guide projects coming from society, structure the postal and phone services so that they don't depend solely on the national networks etc.
3. Institutionalise this cross-border zone. To perpetuate the capitation of European financing with the prospect of redefining the criteria of eligibility, the political actors operate a process of institutionalisation of the cross-border space. In other words, in the future only those spaces endowed with a structure of collective management will benefit from the European subsidies. It also avoids the elaboration of territorial representations and confers a unity on the space.

The mutual addressing of issues along the border, and proposed actions to resolve them, contributed directly to the legitimisation of cross-border cooperation “as legitimate objectives of public action”. By undertaking this action, the decision-makers participate in the institutionalisation of the region. It also underlined “*a comprehensive vision of the common good*”<sup>1</sup> which extends beyond national borders. By expressing the intention to create a ‘border living area’, collective interests appear to outweigh the ‘general interest’.

The actions undertaken have led to “*production territorialised by the common good*”<sup>2</sup>, leaving the state no longer the only relevant voice in creating and implementing public policy; instead, it becomes a player among others in relation to the region, shifting the role of the state and resulting in a relative loss of its monopoly on the processes of public action.

In a more indirect way, the project intends to compensate for the deficit of knowledge regarding Franco-Catalan cross-border cooperation; except for the fact that the cooperations are numerically few. This is shown by the absence of structure capable of carrying out common projects; while in the Franco-German and Franco-Swiss areas, instruments establishing mechanisms of integrated cooperation were set up in the 1990s, this type of device in the Catalan zone is not so frequently used. After several realisations in precursory spaces in the North and North-East of France, the choice of the Eurodistrict as “the appellation” and EGTC as legal support partially proceeds from an “*institutional mimicry*”<sup>3</sup>.

### The implicit stakes

Even if numerous political actors have been involved during the various phases of the decision-making process, the importance of its financial capacity and administrative weight appears to have given the Generalitat, the initiator of the project, the upper hand to impose its aspirations regarding identity. Although not expressly stated, symbolic stakes are present.

Firstly, the map drawn by an expert from the Generalitat showing the Eurodistrict raises a problem. Only the historic demarcations of the old ‘comarcas’ are visible, therefore disregarding French and Spanish administrative zones. In addition, the line representing the state border is hardly more important than that of the other territorial limits, place names are written in Catalan. Thus, the representation of the geographical area of the EGTC is similar in some ways to a map of Catalonia in the eleventh century.

Secondly, the choice of the town where the Eurodistrict constitution was signed in 2007 would not seem to be a haphazard one. After the signature of the Treaty of the

1 Faure, Alain. “Territoires/territorialisation”, in Boussaguet L., Jacquot S., Ravinet P. (eds.), *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques*, Paris, Presses de Sciences po, 2014, p. 626.

2 Lascoumes P., Le Bourhis J.-P. (1998), “Le bien commun comme construit territorial. Identités d’action et procédures”, *Politix*, 11 (42).

3 Mény, Yves, *Les politiques du mimétisme institutionnel : la greffe et le rejet*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1993.

Pyrenees, Céret was the town where the negotiations defining territorial limits between the two Kingdoms took place. By deciding to launch a project having a mission “to go beyond the border” in the place where the border was drawn, the Generalitat was playing with historic symbolism. By organising such a ‘ceremony’, this institution seems to inaugurate another era of border history. After a period of construction and consolidation of national limits, the aim was now to infringe them.

Finally, the name ‘cross-border Catalan area’ is not neutral: it makes ‘cultural identity’ the essence of the eurodistrict.

At first sight, the notion of identity is absent but it is implicit in the process. The autonomous government intends to include the Pyrénées-Orientales in a territorial unit mythologised and legitimised by historical and cultural references. Instrumental in the service of a “pan-Catalanist policy”, the Eurodistrict conveys imperceptibly a form of a conquering Catalan identity.

### **Incidence of political rivalries**

If you do not deny the willingness of politics to act on reality by producing tangible effects, public action is not disconnected from the electoral system and political rivalries. That is why the action of the ‘Conseil départemental’ must also be analysed in the context of local political struggles since the decision to implement a Eurodistrict plays a part in local political rivalries.

Policy within the Roussillon area is cut across by a split between the president of the ‘Communauté d’agglomération’ and the president of the ‘Conseil départemental’. The conflict between the institutions is coupled with an old rivalry between two opposing councillors and their sectarian allegiances. This split has moved onto “cross-border ground”. For the president of the ‘Conseil départemental’, it was a question of putting an end to his rival’s monopoly as until then, the latter was a kind of counterattack on ‘Communauté d’agglomération’ projects. The heads of these territorial institutions then put their projects in competition to try and emerge supreme.

The struggle for ownership of the cross-border vision became a battle ground between elected representatives of various institutional groupings and/or ideological orientations. The conflict between the Mayor of Barcelona and President of the Generalitat is one such an example. Cross-border action is primarily a struggle for leadership. In short, the elected representatives engage in a ‘battle’ to impose a legitimate territorial referent.

As can be observed in other local political arenas, conflicts structure the cross-border zone and define its principal rules. They take place partly through participants’ uneven accumulation of resources and partly through the divergent interests that cause implicit hierarchies, power relations and conflicts of interest. If the imbalance between the French Local Authorities and the ‘Generalitat of Catalunya’ is obvious, the most blatant conflict was the one between the ‘Conseil départemental’ and the ‘Communauté urbaine’.

At first glance, the project is consensual. On both sides of the border, all levels of Local Authorities were involved; it was logical that in the interests of integration, the project's initiators required the participation of the 'Communauté d'agglomération'. Nevertheless, much dissension appeared. Although the "Communauté d'agglomération" is a member, the question of the purposes of the structure comes up repeatedly in debates with it pleading for a more precise definition of the Eurodistrict's tasks and an elaboration of a detailed action plan.

A deeper caesura explains these differences. For the geographer David Giband, Local Authorities do not represent the same geographical areas; therefore, their conceptions of spatial organisation will diverge. On the one hand, the 'Communauté d'agglomération' would advocate a model of 'inter-border' development favouring links between border towns and cities, networking within a European corridor. On the other hand, we can suppose 'Conseil départemental' reasoning leans towards a 'cross-border' model, drawing its conception of territorial development from natural (landscapes, relief) and cultural ('Catalanité') referents.

On both sides of the border, all the levels of public action were involved; and the inspirators required, in an integrative logic, the participation of the 'Communauté d'agglomération'. Nevertheless, many dissensions arise. If the 'Communauté d'agglomération' is an associate member, the question of the purposes of the structure returns repeatedly in debates; the 'Communauté d'agglomération' pleading for a more precise definition of the missions, the elaboration of a detailed action plan, articulating a "*rhetoric of the unity*"<sup>4</sup> legitimised by the links provided by history and identity. The cross-border area would appear as a homogeneous territorial entity thus resisting the model imposed by the two nation states. These two visions of the cross-border space are also the outcome of a territorial anchoring and division of competences: while the 'Communauté d'agglomération' represents urban interests, the 'Conseil départemental' defends rural interests.

The amount of financial participation by the 'Communauté d'agglomération' is of significance since it is committed to only make an annual minimum contribution; a decision that does not reflect a spirit of solidarity.

If the Eurodistrict offers a frame of stable interactions, the mechanisms of integration which it sets up, collide in "*localised struggles*"<sup>5</sup>. The Catalan case demonstrates other examples which attest to politico-institutional divisions. Even if the cross-border project aims to erase the national borders, it has yet to succeed in overcoming the local ones.

### **An uncertain future**

The future of the Eurodistrict seems today hypothetical: the convention and the statutes,

4 Giband, David, "L'espace transcatalan en question (introduction)". *Sud-Ouest européen*, "Catalogne-Catalognes", n°28, 2009.

5 Gaxie, Daniel, "Introduction. Des luttes institutionnelles à l'institution dans les lutes", in Gaxie, Daniel (eds), *Luttes d'institutions : enjeux et contradictions de l'administration centrale*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, p. 11.



passed more than five years ago are still not approved by the States. Remaining for the most part evasive on the topic, the participants seem to be in a state of uncertainty; the information relative to the effective realisation of the project appears to be withheld. The hypothesis that the 'Generalitat' is in retreat, appears the most plausible, for two reasons. First, the costs of the functioning of the Eurodistrict seem incompatible with current efforts to cut public spending. Then, secondly, contrary to statements made by the leaders, it is likely that the executive have decided not to pursue a project introduced by the previous majority. Indeed, the 'Conseil départemental' and the 'Generalitat', the initiating institutions, are politically opposed; whereas the 'socialist party' is the majority in the first assembly, a pro-independence coalition of centre-right and centre-left is the majority in the other. While a form of "political closeness" has certainly encouraged the emergence of the project, this new political configuration may cause its failure.

### Obstacles to political integration

From an analysis of the Eurodistrict, the low degree of institutionalisation of cross-border action comes out again. The capacity of the group of participants to coordinate territorial coalitions in the long term, to build strategies and common policies, seems fragile, fallible, vulnerable. In other words, the political integration, in the sense of a *"process by which the political actors stemming from various national horizons are brought to modify their feeling of loyalty, their expectations and their political activities towards a new center"*<sup>6</sup>, stumbles over diverse obstacles.

Firstly, the cooperation of participants is of a precarious nature. Sometimes their viability is uncertain when European subsidies come to an end, sometimes their objectives are compromised by the emergence of conflict; also, sometimes, since cooperation can be based on "automatic solidarity" bringing a partnership cemented by a close political outlook, it can be called into question by electoral changes. In the same sense, much cooperation ensues from bonds of friendship or from personal affinities which feeds into a feeling of fragility.

Secondly, it is as though the decision-makers undertook the cross-border scenario with the aim of serving their own interests, by enriching their directory of action and by mobilising a set of partners and a set of resources. Apart from any desire for integration, decision-makers devise the cross-border project as an *"opportunity to strengthen their position in the authorities from which they come"*<sup>7</sup>. Phases of opening and closure are altered, according to the resources and the profits they can take from it. Also, separating 'policies' from 'politics' undermines the crystallisation of a "cross-border mutual interest"; the interests of the territorial constituencies is that of the prevailing elected member. It is the 'political district' that structures cross-border cooperation, even more than the limits of sovereignty does.

6 Haas, Ernst. *The Uniting of Europe*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1958, p. 13.

7 Nay, Olivier. *La région, une institution : la représentation, le pouvoir et la règle dans l'espace régional*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, p. 7.

Finally, cross-border mobilisation is limited in terms of capacity for action, decision-making and responsibility. Having limited legal and budgetary resources, the political agents have no capacity to breathe new life into other modes of political regulation. Cross-border policies are characterised by level of autonomy and a dependence on external resources (European in particular).

Other limitations to action are administrative, institutional, political, fiscal and legislative differences, which lead to persistent separation within the project area; while they were not evened out by the European integration process, local decision-makers are not able to eradicate them. Contrary to the most radical interpretation of a “borderless world”, the borders are still ‘*envelopes*’<sup>8</sup> that divide and differentiate jurisdictions, political cultures, administrative models, national political styles. These asymmetries, which have widened over time create two “separate worlds” and are obstacles to action.

The “historical neo-institutionalism” insisted on the importance of “the institutional inheritance” on procedures for public action. Cross-border initiatives are so impeded by a set of constraints which impinge on the decision-makers, that their margin for freedom is reduced and leads them to act following a specific path. In other words, the “*institutional options*”<sup>9</sup> of the past create obstacles to change. As a result, of this “policy lock-in”, local polities find themselves “confined” to the national space; without the possibility to overcome transborder obstacles, cross-border actions are ineffective.

The Catalan case is not an isolated one: research on other Local Authorities have shown a low degree of institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation making it a generalised characteristic. Solange Verger classes the process of institutional construction in the Franco-Belgian zone as “*fragile and unfinished*”. As in the Catalan case, cross-border cooperation is fragmented, scattered and segmented. We can observe the “*assertion of institutional orders which overlap and compete more than they complement*”<sup>10</sup>. Along the same lines, Birte Wassenberg considers that the profusion of measures in the area of the Upper Rhine (Franco-German-Swiss) compromises political integration: the build-up of organisations engenders rivalries and creates new frontiers inside the border area. Furthermore, like the Catalan example, cooperation suffers from struggles between Local Authorities that do not collaborate, making the cross-border area a battle ground. Hence, the emergence of a common vision of development is impossible.

Bruno Dupeyron’s thesis corroborates these observations: he talks about the Franco-German area, with few institutions composed of restricted, precarious and sometimes opposing networks. Philippe Hammen evokes “*the gap between the advanced functional integration and the weakness of the political integration*” in the area

8 Foucher, Michel, *Fronts et frontières : un tour du monde géopolitique*, Paris, Fayard, 2007.

9 Palier, Bruno, “Path dependence”, in Boussaguet L., Jacquot S., Ravinet P. (eds.), *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques*, Paris, Presses de Sciences po, 2014, p. 414.

10 Verger, Solange, *Les chemins multiples de la coopération transfrontalière franco-belge : analyse des dynamiques institutionnelles*, thèse de doctorat en Science politique, IEP de Grenoble; Université Catholique de Louvain, 2011.

encompassing Lorraine, Luxembourg, Saarland and part of the Wallonia; if *“new emerging areas, they are not stabilized and their actual content remains variable”*: we observe after all a *“partial institutionalisation process”*<sup>11</sup>.

## Conclusion

Cross-border cooperation appears ultimately to be marked by fragility given that the participants seem to be guided more by their own interest than by building a common local interest. Furthermore, a complexity exists due to the plethora of heterogeneous participants and various levels of public action involved in decision-making dominated by uncertainty which leads to a form of precariousness and instability which affects the projects.

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11 Hamman, Philippe, *Sociologie des espaces-frontières : les relations transfrontalières autour des frontières françaises de l'est*, Strasbourg, PUS, pp. 9-13, 2013.

# The Benefits and Challenges for Cross-border Cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion



**Marek Olszewski**

*The article concerns some benefits and challenges for cross-border cooperation issues. The author has made an attempt to analyse them in the context of current and future cooperation using a Polish-Czech euroregion, the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, as an example. Description of the specificity of euroregional cooperation in Poland and a short outline of history and geography and organisational structure of the Euroregion are the point of departure for elaboration of the topic.*

## Introduction

The origins of European cross-border cooperation organised in the form of euroregions date back to 1958 when the first structure of that kind was founded: the German-Dutch euroregion, Euregio [Miszczuk, 2013, p.188]. In Poland, the early days of cross-border cooperation go back to the 1990s when the euro-regionalisation process was initiated by Nysa Euroregion [Szymła, 1999, p. 267]. In a relatively short period of time, 16 euroregions were founded on all Polish borders. All 16 euroregions: Pomerania, Pro Europa Viadrina, Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr, Nysa, Glacensis, Pradziad, Silesia, Śląsk Cieszyński, Beskidy, Tatry, Karpacki, Bug, Puszcza Białowieska, Niemen, Bałtyk Łyna-Ława are still functioning. [*Euroregiony...*, 2007, p. 20].

On the one hand, euroregions help to solve many problems specific to borderlands, such as daily 'pendulum migration', the necessity of expansion of local spatial infrastructure, problems of trade restriction abolition, poor development caused by peripheral location of the region, environmental preservation problems or the need for removing cultural barriers. Cross-border cooperation within the euroregion contributes to 'vanishing' borders which have separated one country from another and creates new bridges between neighbouring countries as successive stages of creating an integrated Europe [Olszewski, 2011, pp. 269-270].

On the other hand, euroregions contend with difficulties of both a formal and a legal nature, some institutional, infrastructural, financial, economic, social and even environmental problems [Mierosławska, 2004, pp. 42-58]. They also meet current challenges and should be prepared for those in future.

Situated in the Polish-Czech borderland, the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is an example of a region where benefits and challenges for cross-border cooperation play a crucial role. Many different factors – such as settlement, geography, industrial development

and decline, demography, history and politics – have influenced the area. It has become a kind of laboratory where various processes have taken place and continue to have an impact [Olszewski, 2011, pp. 259-260].

### **Basic regulations concerning cross-border cooperation in Poland**

The substantive and organisational basis of cross-border cooperation applied to Polish euroregional policy has been determined in numerous multilateral agreements – the Madrid Convention, European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions, European Charter of Local Self-government or European Charter of Regional Self-government. All the agreements have contributed and still contribute to establish cross-border cooperation on a regional or local level based on separate agreements. The specific extent of cross-border cooperation in Poland and the Czech Republic has been presented in international treaties, bi- or tri-lateral regional or local agreements [Olszewski, Kasperek, Olszewska, Böhm, Madziová, 2014, p. 20].

The current Polish experience in euroregional cooperation includes two models of making and developing law and the institutional basis applied during the process of formalisation of cooperation at regional or local authority level. The former (self-government model) is grounded in establishing a union of municipalities on the Polish side of the border which entered into an agreement on establishing a euroregion with a similar foreign union. The latter (administrative-self-government model) is based on an interregional or cross-border union established by regional and local administrative authorities and self-governments. Formal affiliation with a euroregion generally means membership of a national association. An intention of accession to an association is expressed in the form of a resolution passed by an appropriate statutory body of an accessing unit. Because Euroregions apply different organisational and legal models they differ from one another in number of members [Olszewski, 2011, pp. 269-272].

The euroregions' agreements and statutes include aims which directly refer to cross-border agreements and purposes connected with conditions in the particular borderland as well as local and regional demands and possibilities. The main goals of cross-border cooperation in Polish euroregions coincide with the specificity of the issues determined in European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions, the euroregions' agreements and statutes and their organisational structures. The statutes define some conditions of financing euroregional cooperation: as a general rule, they impose an obligation on euroregions' members to co-finance euroregional activity in different forms and amounts [Olszewski, 2011, *ibid.*].

Creating a new instrument of territorial cooperation – European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) – was a great moment in both Polish and European cross-border cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The instrument enables public-legal subjects to team up and deliver joint

1 Passing the regulation of 5 July 2006, [Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)] amended in 2013 [Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013].

services beyond the borders of the Member States. An EGTC is a legal entity and it aims to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation among EU Member States in order to enhance their economic and social cohesion. In each of the Member States the EGTC has full legal standing and capacity for action in accordance with national law binding in each of the Member State. An EGTC can be created by the following partners: the Member States, regional authorities, bodies governed by public law or associations consisting of bodies belonging to one or more of these categories. An EGTC acts on behalf of their members, who adopt their statutes by means of a special convention describing the organisation and activities of the EGTC [Olszewski, Kasperek, Olszewska, Lewczuk, Thevenet, Böhm, 2010, pp. 36-37; Böhm, 2014, p. 43, Męda, 2015, p. 64].

In Poland, the instrument of EGTC has not yet been applied (September 2016) to euroregional cooperation in Polish borderlands and none of the euroregions has been transformed into an EGTC. There is one exception in Tatra Euroregion where its member self-governments have set up TATRA EGTC in order to implement projects on tourism [<http://www.euwt-tatry.eu/>].

### **The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion: its origins, geographical location and organisational structure**

Cieszyn Silesia is a special region of the Polish-Czech borderland. Originally the land belonged to the Great Moravian Empire. By 991, it had become a part of Poland. At the turn of 1289-1290 Cieszyn Silesia acquired the status of the separate Duchy of Teschen which in 1327 was incorporated into the Bohemian Crown. In 1653, with the end of the Piast dynasty, the Habsburg dynasty came into ownership of the Duchy and it was in their hands until the demise of Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. At that time a conflict arose between reborn Poland and a newly created independent state – Czechoslovakia. Cieszyn Silesia was a subject of the conflict and on 28 July 1920 the Conference of Ambassadors in Spa, Belgium decided upon its division.

The artificial division of the former historically, ethnographically and socially unified region resulted in tens of thousands of Poles finding themselves on the other side of the border, in Czechoslovakia. This fact has strongly influenced mutual Polish-Czech relations; in the majority of cases based on animosities, grudges and conflicts. While the Polish and Czech nations have never had a liking for each other – and even though it is hard to talk about a distinct change in mutual views or attitudes – there are some forms of cooperation, mainly institutional and organisational, in different areas of life [Rusek, 1999, pp. 234-235].

The intensification of Polish-Czech relations occurred in the divided region after 1989 when the Polish and Czech totalitarian regimes collapsed. The first major steps forward in cross-border cooperation were taken by the self-governments of Cieszyn and Czech Cieszyn (Český Těšín); this was an impetus for successive activities. The formal cooperation between the Polish and Czech sides of the border commenced with the

signing of the regional cooperation agreement on 24 March 1993 in Czech Cieszyn<sup>2</sup>. Three years later, on 10 January 1996 in Kyjov another agreement<sup>3</sup> was signed, pursuant to which a coordinating group responsible for the further development of Polish-Czech cooperation was appointed. The group's tasks comprised the exchange of information in the field of culture, sports and passenger traffic. The thriving cooperation in the area of information exchange led naturally to the formation of a euroregion [Dočkal, Chovančík et al., 2005, pp.114-115].

The Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion is one of the youngest euroregions in Poland. The agreement<sup>4</sup> on its establishment was signed on 22 April 1998 by the Olza Association of Development and Regional Cooperation and Regionální sdružení pro česko-polskou spolupráci Těšínského Slezska (Regional Association of Czech-Polish Cooperation of the Cieszyn Silesia)<sup>5</sup>.

The Euroregion is situated in the borderland area in southern Poland and the north-eastern Czech Republic, in the vicinity of Slovakia. It covers an area of 1,730 km<sup>2</sup> which is inhabited by 672,000 people (of which 360,000 live in the Czech part and 312,000 in the Polish one). The River Olza is a natural axis in the territory; Cieszyn and Czech Cieszyn (Český Těšín), the heart of the region, are situated on its banks. In Poland, the Euroregion stretches from Godów to Istebna, and in the Czech Republic, from Bohumín to Hřava. On the Polish side it comprises 16 municipalities of the Silesian Voivodeship and one district (the Cieszyn District) and on the Czech side, about 40 municipalities united in three associations, 10 companies and eight NGOs (Figure 1).

The objectives of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion are:

- the exchange of experience and information concerning the region's development,
- the exchange of experience and information concerning the labour market,
- cooperation in development planning,
- solving common problems with transportation, traffic and communication as well as citizens' security,
- solving shared problems concerning ecology and natural environment,
- cooperation in the prevention and elimination of natural disasters consequences,
- cooperation in the sphere of economy and trade,
- the development of tourism and passenger traffic, including further improvement of cross-border traffic,

2 Związek Komunalny Ziemi Cieszyńskiej (Municipal Unit of the Cieszyn district) was a Polish signatory to the agreement and Regionální rada rozvoje a spolupráce se sídlem v Třinci (Regional Council of Development and Cooperation in Třinec) and Svaz obcí regionu Karviná (Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Karvina district) were Czech signatories.

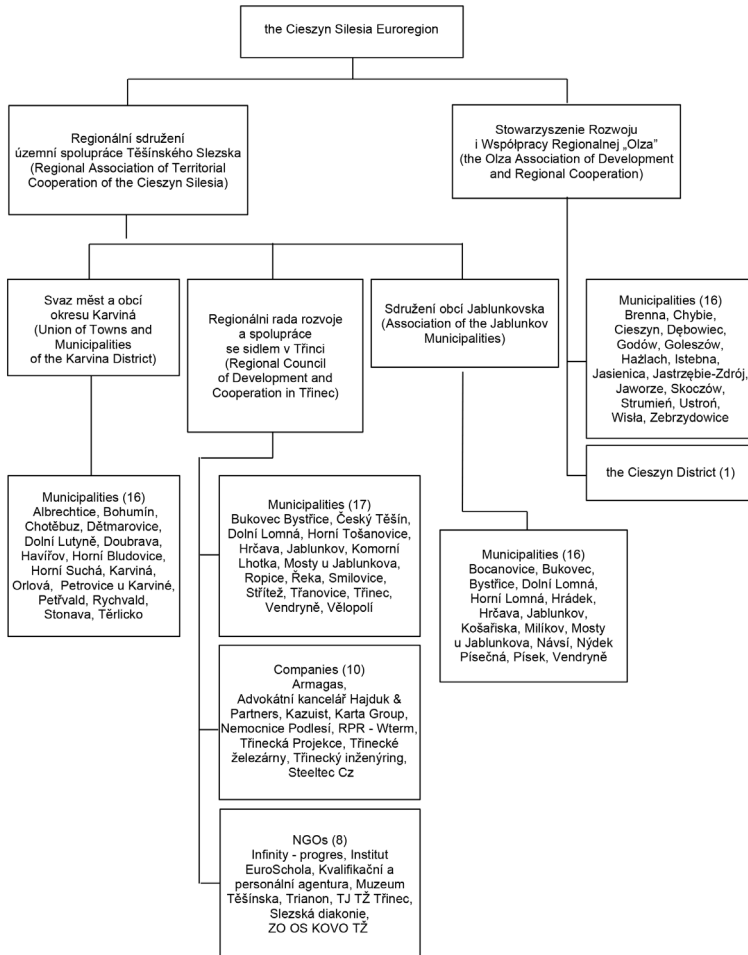
3 Signatories to the agreement were the same organisations as to the previous one.

4 The Euroregion is an agreement on a community of Polish and Czech associations uniting towns, municipalities and unions of municipalities which means it is not a legal entity.

5 Since 2008 Regionální sdružení územní spolupráce Těšínského Slezska (Regional Association of Territorial Cooperation of the Cieszyn Silesia)

- campaigns supporting the development of culture, education and sport, in particular the exchange of information concerning these activities,
- cultural exchange and protection of the shared cultural heritage,
- cooperation of rescue services and mountain rescue services in the Euroregion,
- cooperation between schools and youth groups in the Euroregion.

**Figure 1:** The organizations forming the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion

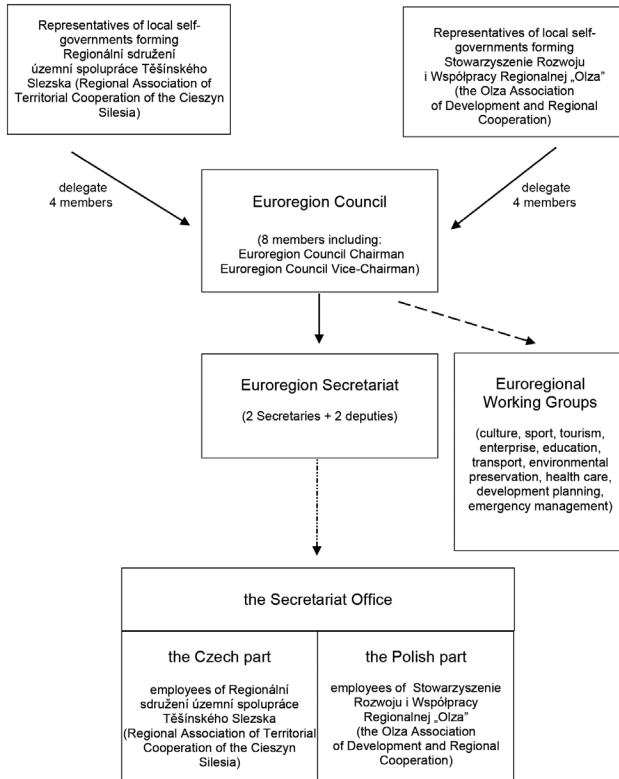


Source: the author's own elaboration on the basis of: [<http://www.smook.cz/>; <http://www.regrada.cz/>; <http://www.jablunkovsko.cz/>; <http://www.euregio-teschinensis.eu/euroregion-tesinske-slezsko/struktura-euroregionu/>]



As regards the structure of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion bodies, the agreement on regional cooperation mentions two – the Euroregion Council and the Euroregion Secretariat (figure no 2).

**Figure 2:** The structure of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion bodies.



Source: the author's own elaboration on the basis of: [Umowa...; Olszewski, 2015, pp. 129-187]

The Council is the supreme governing body of the Euroregion. It consists of eight members, four on each side. The Euroregion Council elects its chair and vice-chair from among its members, respecting the principle of division of the functions between both sides and the alternation of the terms of office. The Euroregion Council's term corresponds to those of the delegating entities on both sides. The ordinary meetings of the Euroregion Council are held at least twice a year, one of them being connected with

the general meeting of the representatives of municipalities and associations for the purpose of the presentation of a schedule of the Euroregion activities. An extraordinary meeting of the Euroregion Council may be convened at any time upon a motion of two members of the Euroregion Council. The Council meeting is convened by the Euroregion Secretariat. The Council's tasks comprise the adoption of the Euroregion statutes, the adoption of joint objectives, making decisions concerning the terms of the use of common funds, the adoption of reports on the use of funds, the appointment of members of the Secretariat, the formation of working groups (they are not the Euroregion bodies) and, the delegation of the Euroregion representatives. The Council may invite the representatives of the state authorities and administration to participate in its meetings in an advisory capacity.

The Secretariat is the executive body of the Euroregion. It consists of two Secretaries running the Office. Each Secretary has a deputy. In current affairs the secretaries perform their functions independently, in other affairs they act in consultation. The Secretariat's Office performs the administrative functions of the Euroregion. The Office's functioning is an internal matter for each of the parties who guarantee the proper conditions for the accomplishment of their tasks. The Euroregion Secretariat's tasks comprise the external representation of the Euroregion, convening the Euroregion Council's meetings, preparing and submitting draft resolutions of the Euroregion Council and preparing information materials for the Assembly of the representatives of municipal national associations, implementing the Euroregion Council's resolutions and running the Secretariat Office.

### **The benefits of cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion**

The benefits resulting from cross-border cooperation can be assessed from various perspectives.

In the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion the opportunity of European funds management involving support for public institutions and NGOs was one of the most significant benefits for the both partners of the euroregional agreement (the Olza Association of Development and Regional Cooperation and the Regional Association of Territorial Cooperation of the Cieszyn Silesia). In 1999-2015 the Euroregion co-financed 455 cross-border projects within the Fund for a total sum of €4,479,000 including 94 projects within the Joint Small Project Fund of Phare CBC (1999-2003); 89 projects within the Small Project Fund of the Community Initiative Programme INTERREG IIIA the Czech Republic-Poland (2004-2006); and as many as 272 initiatives within the Small Project Fund of Poland-the Czech Republic Cross-Border Operational Programme (2007-2013). These projects affected different cross-border cooperation policy areas, especially culture, sport, tourism and to a lesser extent enterprise and environmental preservation. But more significantly, their 'soft' characters contribute to the development of cross-border interpersonal relations. [*Sprawozdanie...*, 2015, pp. 10-17; Holisz, Kajstura, Kasparek, Limanowska, Malaka, Małek, Olszewska, 2015, p. 13].

The first positive dimension of cross-border cooperation is directly connected with another; the realisation of special projects promoted by the partners of the euroregional agreement co-financed within previous and current editions of the Small Project Fund managed by the Euroregion, as well as within so-called big Polish-Czech cross-border programmes.

As an example, the Olza Association of Development and Regional Cooperation implemented over 50 its own projects within the space of the 15 years of its functioning. More than half of them were co-financed within the above mentioned two financing sources [Załącznik..., 2015]. The undertakings considerably influenced the level of cross-border cooperation which increased as a result of fully achieving the potentials of both parts of the borderland and treating the Polish-Czech borderland as an entirety.

Undoubtedly, entering into the Schengen area on 21 December 2007 was a great success for both Poland and the Czech Republic and the event strongly influenced their cross-border cooperation. Cooperation has been made much easier because internal border checks have largely been abolished. The free movement of people as well as the free movement of goods and services immediately resulted in economic growth in the border zone of the Euroregion. The fact also resulted in reinforcement of cooperation between Polish and Czech police services who can now act in the neighbouring country during cross-border observations or cross-border pursuits regulated by the Schengen Convention. Moreover, both the Polish and Czech judiciary implemented some solutions concerning criminal cases such as legal aid, extradition or the European Arrest Warrant within judicial cross-border cooperation.

The entry of Poland and the Czech Republic into the Schengen Area, has also had a psychological effect. Some inhabitants of the Polish part of the Euroregion claim that entering Schengen has contributed to the growth of their self-esteem and restored their sense of dignity as legitimate and equal partners with other citizens of the Schengen Area [Nowak, Olszewski, 2010, p. 9-10].

In the last 10 years, cooperation with institutions from western, northern and southern<sup>6</sup> Europe based on knowhow and transferring best practices has become crucial for both partners of the euroregional agreement. As a result of cooperation, the territorial integration process has been supported, the Euroregion promoted and some problems connected with the existence of the Polish-Czech border have been prevented [Olszewski, 2014, pp. 84-98].

6 EURODISTRICT PAMINA; the subjects organized into TEIN network (*Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network*): Fachhochschule Kärnten, The Centre for Cross Border Studies, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)/EVTZ Kompetenzzentrum, Institut d'Études Politiques Université de Strasbourg, Centre de recherche Discontinuités Université d'Artois, Région Nord-Pas de Calais, Université Savoie Mont Blanc, Universitat de Girona, Univerza v Ljubljani Fakulteta za upravo, Université de Perpignan Via Domitia; the subjects associated into TEIN network: association of European Border Regions, mission opérationnelle transfrontalière (MOT) [<http://www.transfrontier.eu/>].

Among numerous examples of solutions taken from other European borderlands there are two which should be mentioned. The first example is the Polish-Czech-Slovak Euroinstitute (established along the lines of the Euro-Institut in Kehl, Germany) which at time of writing (September 2016) is a cooperation network consisting of both public and non-governmental sector actors. Ultimately it will become a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation [<http://www.euro-in.org/>]. It aims to act in the best common interests of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia through realising mutual public tasks; solving problems arising due to different political-administrative and structural systems functioning in the three parts of the borderland; removing all kinds of administrative barriers; encouraging Polish, Czech and Slovak actors to cooperate in cross-border partnerships; and developing cooperation instruments and methods which can be applied not only in the Polish-Czech-Slovak borderland but also in other cross-border areas in Europe [Porozumienie..., 2015].

The second example was originally a project, *‘Ciesz się Cieszynem – Ogród dwóch brzegów’* (*‘Enjoy Cieszyn – the Two Shores Garden’*) and since 2007 has been a programme implemented together by Cieszyn and Czech Cieszyn. The programme involves common activities connected with the development and revitalisation of the banks of the River Olza and its surroundings within both towns’ boundaries. The programme was inspired by the experience of the French-German borderland between cities of Strasbourg and Kehl on the shores of the River Rhine. Within the programme there are some priority projects such as development of the route linking the markets of Cieszyn and Czech Cieszyn and building a European bridge over the river; adaptation of approaches to the bridge; construction of some footbridges for pedestrians and cyclists; revitalisation of parks on the Castle Hill (PL) and *‘Masarykovy sady’* (CZ); creation of a cycling loop along the banks of the River Olza; and adaptation of the green belt for sports and recreational areas. Some of the above mentioned projects have been implemented through joint cross-border cooperation. They have been named *‘Revitalpark 2010’*, *‘Sport Most’* (*‘Sport Bridge’*), *‘Sport Park’* and *‘The Two Shores Garden 2013-2015’*, *‘Revitalisation of space and buildings of the Cieszyn Venice’*. Some of them are still waiting for implementation [Balcar, Kasperek, Laštůvka, Malaka, Olszewski, Razima, Slováček Rypienová, 2015, p. 19].

In analysing the benefits of cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, consideration should be given to how the benefits are perceived by Polish and Czech actors (especially self-governments) and local communities, and how these are expressed in strategies and development plans<sup>7</sup>. Strengths identified in the Polish documents, including location (the proximity of the border and the tourist attractions on the other side of it) and communications accessibility (the intersection of the Czech and Slovak communications routes, a railway junction of international significance, numerous border crossings) come to the fore.

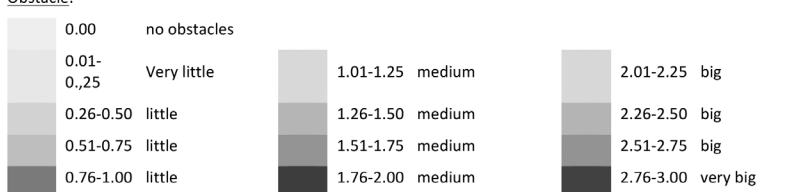
7 The author of the article, within the project *‘Future territorial cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion. We want you to get to know us – 4’* realized in 2015 by the partners of the euroregional agreement, carried out a detailed analysis of 34 documents (17 Polish and 17 Czech ones).

There are many more strengths presenting opportunities for cross-border cooperation in the Euroregion: a potential connection with culture (Polish-Czech cooperation between cultural institutions, international cultural events, joint tradition and merging of Polish and Czech cultures, ability to communicate in the neighbour's language); a potential connection with tourism (a system of marked cycle routes meeting the Czech ones including international cycle route Eurovelo R4, tourist traffic and forming centres of local border traffic, developing tourist accommodation); and a potential connecting with the economy (Polish businesspeople are very active on the Czech market, development of economic cooperation and foreign trade, economic potential and opportunity of joint investments). Both the membership of the Olza Association of Development and Regional Cooperation and partnerships with Czech institutions have been identified as a strength of cross-border cooperation by the representatives of Polish self-governments. Among the strengths of the cross-border cooperation identified in the Czech documents, location (in the Czech-Polish/Czech-Polish-Slovak borderlands, the favourable situation relative to main traffic routes linking Poland with Slovakia) has been the most often mentioned advantage in the context of tourism, economy, transport and quality of life. An additional strength identified is communications accessibility (some sections of transit roads of international significance – road and rail transports, border crossings, easy access to Polish and Slovak markets) which has been determined as another essential factor. Furthermore, the partnership with Polish towns, promoting common tourist attractions situated along the River Olza and, oddest of all, coexistence with strong national minorities, especially with the strong Polish one, has also been mentioned as the strengths of the cross-border cooperation.

### **Challenges for cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion**

The challenges for cross-border cooperation with reference to the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion can be considered in two ways: firstly, the existing barriers to Polish-Czech cooperation which should be removed or overcome by the Euroregion; secondly, those which are slowly emerging or that will emerge in future and should then be eliminated. Research conducted by M. Olszewski in 2015 [Olszewski, 2015, pp. 4-21] showed how many barriers have been identified or influenced cooperation between Polish and Czech institutions in the borderland (Table 1).

**Table no 1:** Obstacles to cross-border cooperation

OBSTACLE	ESCP <sup>8</sup>	ESCCZ <sup>9</sup>
Different regulations and legal norms on both sides of the border	1.38	1.57
Lack of an equal foreign partner	0.43	0.00
Complex procedure for applying for funds	0.86	1.29
Limited number of offers for cooperation with foreign institutions	0.14	0.00
Llack of appropriate institutions dealing with cross-border cooperation	0.10	0.14
Different organisational structures of institutions which want to cooperate with each other	0.81	0.93
Lack of cooperation competence in the institutions	0.05	0.50
Insufficiently developed information system concerning cooperation opportunities	0.10	0.50
Lack of financial means for cooperation with partners	1.95	1.71
Low efficiency of a financial settlement system of projects	1.05	1.57
Asymmetry in the level of economic development of cooperating institutions	0.24	0.07
Dissimilarity of economic systems on both sides of the border	0.29	0.57
Insufficient knowledge of the partner's language	1.05	1.36
Negative stereotypes of the neighbours	0.76	1.43
Historical reasons	0.52	0.79
Intercultural barriers	0.86	0.64
Anxiety about an inflow of foreign capital	0.05	0.00
Long distance between cooperating institutions	1.00	0.00
Differences in development planning, transport infrastructure	0.14	0.36
Natural obstacles (mountains, rivers...)	0.10	0.29
<b>Obstacle:</b> 		

Source: [Olszewski, 2015, p. 17]

The lack or limited amount of financial means are the main reasons preventing organisations from engaging in cross-border activities (influence factor: 1.71-1.95). The problem affects NGOs in particular, but also some public organisations which very often do not have enough money to provide for cross-border project implementation. The situation is getting worse because of the requirement for matching funding by project implementers. Admittedly, some organisations and self-government entities

8 Polish part of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion.

9 Czech part of the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion.

have succeeded in working out procedures for granting bank loans to projects, but loan amounts are limited and they are available only for creditworthy organisations. Low efficiency of a financial settlement system of projects (influence factor: 1.05-1.36) has worked against borrowers because they have often had to wait longer than two years for reimbursement of incurred project costs.

A complex procedure for applying for funds (influence factor for the Czech institutions: 1.29) was another important issue brought up by the respondents. They complained frequently about excessive bureaucracy which discouraged them from applying for grants. Among the barriers limiting cross-border cooperation by the institutions, were organisational and legal differences between cooperating states (particularly concerning territorial self-government entities and their branches) which caused some problems with finding counterparts in the administrative structure of a municipal council of a neighbouring state or with taking joint activities (different competence of services and their different positions in a hierarchy of public organisations) (influence factor: 1.38-1).

Negative stereotypes also influence cross-border cooperation. They derive from the complex and painful history of Cieszyn Silesia (influence factor for the Czech institutions: 1.43). The Czechs living in the Czech part of the Euroregion perceive Poles much more negatively than they are perceived by Poles – coinciding with the results of national research. Poles like the Czechs. They know Czech cinematography, especially comedies. They think the Czech language sounds nice and they like the ironical Czech sense of humour and optimistic approach to life. The Czechs seem to consider Poles mentally and socially close to them but their degree of liking is much lower. [*Polska, Czechy, Niemcy...*, 2013, pp. 31-32].

Insufficient knowledge of the partner's language (influence factor: 1.05-1.57) was the last of the main obstacles mentioned by the respondents. The Czechs speak Polish more often than the Poles speak Czech. During more formal meetings, professional Polish-Czech interpreters help to communicate or, on rare occasions, English is used for communication. The language barriers do exist and sometimes they make cooperation difficult, especially when specialist vocabulary (legal or financial terminology) is necessary. For some respondents, the similarity between the two languages makes communication more difficult because some people only pretend that they know and understand the foreign language which additionally complicates the relations. In Cieszyn, the inhabitants claim that old people communicate in Polish and Czech and only the youth speak English when they talk to Polish or Czech peers. The neighbour's language is more often spoken and understood among the older than the young generation [Fuksiewicz, 2013, p. 14].

On the other hand, treating the challenges for cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion as threats and examining them from the angle of opinions about it expressed in local strategies and development plans, there are noticeable differences

between the Czechs' and Poles' perceptions of the threats [Olszewski, 2015, pp. 4-128].

Poles identify threats in the following areas of cross-border cooperation:

- 1) tourism, including: cheaper accommodation services in the Czech Republic; increased competitiveness of neighbouring border regions with a more attractive tourist offering and a higher standard of services for skiers in the Czech Republic; and growing interest in international tourism offers (including the Czech ones);
- 2) economy/enterprise, including: coal mining in the borderland, often causing mining damages; better infrastructure in the Czech Republic; more favourable conditions for business activity in the Czech Republic – greater competitiveness of SMEs on the Czech side of the border; and
- 3) environmental preservation, including: permanent threats to the natural environment by large industrial plants situated in the Czech Republic; adverse effects resulting from planned cross-border investments in the Czech Republic; the lack of comprehensive activities connected with flood control; and pro-ecology cross-border activities.

Czechs have definitely perceived fewer threats connected with cross-border cooperation than Poles. They gave examples of threats such as the lack of interest in lowering air pollutant emissions in Poland; the location of Czech-Polish-Slovak borderland not being used properly or promoted enough (leading to its isolation) and the building of new ski lifts in Polish ski-resorts.

Apart from the above mentioned challenges for Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion there are a few more:

- after 2020, European Territorial Cooperation will have to face an uncertain future connected with a tense political situation in Europe (Brexit, the bad financial situation in Italy and Greece, the policies of some western European governments striving to implement the 'Multi-speed Europe' concept, rising euroscepticism, the migration crisis);
- fear of liquidation of a financial instrument (Small Project Fund) managed by the Euroregion and the possibility of it being replaced by a single programme addressed to the whole Polish-Czech borderland and coordinated by central/regional authorities;
- establishing new instruments of territorial cooperation (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) on the strength of political decisions (e.g. EGTC Tritia) which do not add any value to cross-border cooperation and are competing artificial 'formations' realising regional interests;
- the rising threat of crime and terrorism and illegal immigration.



## Summary

The analysis of the benefits and challenges for cross-border cooperation in the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion has shown the current situation as well as a possible scenario for the immediate future. There are some positive sides of Polish-Czech collaboration: the opportunity of European funds management; implementation of various cross-border projects; entering into the Schengen zone; taking advantage of interregional collaboration potential to support cross-border cooperation; improving communications accessibility; economic and tourism development; efficient cross-border structures (the Euroregion); and institutional partnerships. On the other hand, cross-border cooperation in the Euroregion encounters numerous problems: formal and legal (different regulations and legal norms on both sides of the border, complex procedure for applying for funds); financial (the lack of financial means for cooperation with partners, low efficiency of a financial settlement system of projects); economic (cheaper but better quality services in the neighbour's country and competitiveness related to them); social (insufficient knowledge of the partner's language, negative stereotypes of the neighbours); and environmental (degradation of the environment caused by large industrial plants, mining damages, the lack of pro-ecology activities).

We should also consider the possibility of continuation of current forms of financing the euroregional cooperation and tendencies for the application of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (an instrument of territorial cooperation support) to political purposes which have nothing in common with cross-border cooperation as well as other numerous external factors related to globalisation.

It is hard to answer unambiguously the question, if and to what extent all the determinants will influence cross-border cooperation within the euroregional structures in the coming future. Regardless of the future situation, the Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion will strive for further integration of its territory and its inhabitants.

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# Leading Cross-border Collaboration in the USA-Mexico Border Region: What is important?



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*The United States-Mexico border region exhibits substantial health and economic disparities. In response, there are hundreds of people and organisations working to protect and improve the health of the region. Cross-border collaborations may reduce health disparities in border regions, with leadership being a key to the success of any cross-border collaborative effort. This article describes a quantitative study utilizing a survey instrument developed to explore the leadership approaches/themes deemed important to develop cross-border health collaborative organisations and relationships within the USA-Mexico collaborative leadership context. In March 2016, 100 cross-border leaders and actors (33 Mexico and 67 USA) participated in a 40 statement, anonymous, Likert-type quantitative survey via Survey Monkey. Participants were instructed to respond as if they were giving 'advice' to someone on how important certain leadership approaches or actions are in leading and developing cross-border health collaborative groups or organisations.*

*As a result of the analysis of the survey responses from both the USA and Mexico, five categorical leadership approaches/themes (Communicate to Engage the Collaborative; Steer the Collaborative; Understand the Members of the Collaborative; Manage the Collaborative; and Strategic Relationship Building for the Collaborative) made up of 20 remaining statements were deemed key in leading a border health collaboration. The findings from this study align with recently published cross-border toolkits from Europe and the*

*USA-Mexico border region that describe the manner in which cross-border leaders and actors should proceed in managing and developing projects and collaboratives. Lastly, findings in this study can be used to enhance cross-border leadership training activities.*

## Introduction

A limited body of work identifies and describes effective collaborative leadership in cross-border health settings. However, to our knowledge, a tool to assess leadership attitudes and beliefs among those working in cross-border public health settings is currently unavailable. Thus, based on the existing literature and discussions with cross-border leaders in the United States (USA), Mexico, Ireland and Northern Ireland we created a survey and fielded it with a sample of cross-border leaders in the USA and Mexico. This article explores participants' beliefs regarding approaches that are conducive to leading and developing cross-border health collaborations.

The United States-Mexico border is approximately 3,141 km in length, spanning four USA states (48 USA counties) and six Mexican states (94 Mexican municipalities). This includes 15 pairs of sister cities. As stated in the 1983 La Paz agreement, signed by the USA and Mexico Federal governments, the border region is considered 60 miles north and south of the physical border.<sup>1</sup> The border region population is approximately 14.94 million people, with about 7.44 million in the USA and 7.50 million in Mexico. The population is expected to increase to about 20 million by 2020.<sup>2</sup>

About 84% of the USA-Mexico border population is urban. Mexico's three largest urban municipalities – Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua and Tijuana and Mexicali in Baja California – account for almost half of the total Mexican border population. Over 80% of the USA border population is concentrated in six counties: San Diego in California, Pima in Arizona and Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo and Webb in Texas. San Diego, alone, represents about 40% of the USA border population.<sup>3</sup> The border regions that are shared among countries are often areas of disparity as it relates to their parent states.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

- 1 United States Mexico Border Health Commission (USA MBHC). [http://www.borderhealth.org/about\\_us.php](http://www.borderhealth.org/about_us.php). Date accessed, May 28, 2016.
- 2 Pan American Health Organization, PAHO TB in the US-Mexico Border Region, [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2511:tb-us-mexico-border-region&Itemid=40275&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2511:tb-us-mexico-border-region&Itemid=40275&lang=en). Date accessed June 16, 2016.
- 3 USA MBHC See (1).
- 4 World Bank Health Financing Country Profile-Mexico <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/01/19783231/mexico-health-financing-profile> Date accessed May 28, 2016.
- 5 OECD (2013), *Regions and Innovation: Collaborating across Borders*, OECD Reviews of Regional Innovation, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264205307> en.
- 6 Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) (2010), *Cross-Border Cooperation in America: Contribution to the Regional Integration Process*, AEBR, Enschede, Netherlands, 2009.CE.16.0.AT.118.

They can be economically weak, have underdeveloped infrastructure and higher unemployment is often present.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Although over recent years there has been increased trade and economic development between the USA and Mexico, working and living conditions for Mexicans in northern border states have worsened over the years.<sup>10,11</sup> In addition, USA counties in the border region are among the most impoverished in the country. Four of the seven poorest cities in the USA are on the Texas-Mexico border and five of the 14 poorest USA counties are in the Texas borderlands.<sup>12,13</sup> The sub-optimal conditions of the border region can contribute to serious health problems for their residents including a higher prevalence of HIV, tuberculosis and other communicable diseases, higher rates of chronic disease as well as other public health threats that have no border (water and airborne environmental issues). Additionally, the high mobility and frequent border crossings of people living in the border region adds another challenging health management dimension.<sup>14,15</sup> For example, the San Diego and Tijuana border region is home to the busiest land border crossing in the world, the San Ysidro border crossing. There are six ports of entry on the California-Baja California border with 48.4 million individual northbound border crossings in 2015, with San Ysidro having 32.7 million (68%) of these total northbound crossings in 2015.<sup>16</sup> This border region is a fluid, ever changing environment.

In order to address the complex needs of the border region, the countries that share a given border must work together to make a difference.<sup>17,18,19</sup> A major component of any collaboration is the leadership that facilitates, guides and builds an impact effort.<sup>20,21,22</sup>

- 7 CIA World Fact book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ee.html>. Date accessed June 16, 2016.
- 8 European Commission (2010), *Regional Policy Contributing to Smart Growth in Europe 2020*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2010)553 final, European Union, Brussels.
- 9 OECD (2012), *Promoting Growth in All Regions*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264174634-en>.
- 10 Warner, D. & Jainke, L. (2003). U.S./Mexico Border Health Issues: The Texas Rio Grande Valley.
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- 14 Williams See (11).
- 15 Ten against TB. TATB, Ten against TB Strategic Plan 2005 to 2010. <http://usmex2024.uscmmediacurator.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Ten-vs-TB-plan.pdf> Date accessed June 1, 2016,
- 16 San Diego Association of Governments, SANDAG, (2015), San Diego-Baja California Border Crossings and Trade Statistics. File Number 3400200.
- 17 Agranoff, R. (2006). "Inside Collaborative Networks: Ten Lessons for Public Managers". *Public Administration Review*, Special Issue, Supplement to Issue: 66(6).
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- 22 Leadership: Collaborative Leadership Theory. Accessed at <http://www.orchestri.com/category/corporate-futuring/medewerkers-human-capital/>.

Leadership in cross-sector and intra-sector collaborations which include border health collaboration, traverse many boundaries and is fundamentally different from position-based leadership authority within organisations.<sup>23,24</sup> Leaders in a cross-border health collaboration may lack formal power or authority and may need to exercise leadership in what is, perhaps, a most difficult context where many parties involved in the collaboration are peers and may not be required (e.g. politically, operationally) to participate. In addition, it has been found that leaders of a collaborative effort may need to focus on promoting and safeguarding the collaborative process, keeping stakeholders at the table through periods of frustration and skepticism, acknowledging small successes along the way, helping stakeholders negotiate difficult points and enforcing group norms and ground rules.<sup>25</sup>

### **Established Cross-Border Leadership Expertise**

In order to explore those leadership themes/approaches needed to develop cross-border health collaborations we enlisted the help and expertise of key cross-border health organisations in the USA-Mexico border region, the United States/Mexico Border Health Commission (USA MBHC), as well as local and state cross-border health departments. The USA MBHC was created as a binational health commission in July 2000 with the signing of an agreement by the Secretary of Health and Human Services of the United States and the Secretary of Health of Mexico.<sup>26</sup> The USA MBHC is composed of the federal secretaries of health, the chief health officers of the 10 (four USA and six Mexico) binational Border States, and prominent community health professionals from both nations. On the USA side of the border, much of the frontline collaborative border work is performed by local (county) and state jurisdictions as they facilitate and coordinate relationships, communications and protocols regarding health issues in their respective border regions. In contrast, on the Mexican side of the border the federal Secretary of Health (also the USA MBHC representative) leads and coordinates this work on the frontline of the border region. The USA MBHC, USA border counties from California and Arizona, all USA state border offices and, specifically, Mexico's Secretary of Health were part of ongoing discussions related to these research concepts that led to the development of the survey instrument for this study.

To bolster our exploration of cross-border collaborative leadership we also looked to the European Union for expertise and vital, cutting edge work being done in the border region of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Several cross-border collaborative toolkits, resources and training programmes have been developed by the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS), Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT) and their many European partners regarding cross-border leadership, project management and evaluation, border

23 Bailey, D. and Koney, K. (1996), "Interorganizational community-based collaboratives: A strategic response to shape the social work agenda," *Social Work*. 41, (6), 602–612.

24 Chrislip, D. (2002). *The Collaborative leadership field book – A guide for citizens and civic leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

25 Baily See (23).

26 USA MBC See (1).



impact assessments, as well as cross-border budget evaluation.<sup>27,28,29</sup> The Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS) is a 'think tank' organisation with offices in Armagh, Northern Ireland and Dublin, Ireland, whose main goal is to enhance and further develop cross-border networks, relationships and collaboration with key partners at local, regional, national, EU and international levels. Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT) is the cross-border health and social care partnership for the Health Service Executive in Ireland and the Southern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts, the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. CAWT's mission is to add value to health and social care activity by bringing a cross-border dimension to the on-going collaboration between the health systems in both jurisdictions and accessing EU funding in support of such activities where appropriate.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to reviewing the robust best practice and guidance documentation, researchers had the opportunity to sit down and discuss many of the key cross-border leadership approaches that have been successful on the island of Ireland. This readied the team to develop the survey.

### The Survey

From the many discussions with the existing cross-border organisations and jurisdictions identified above, as well as the existing literature, we set out to develop a survey tool that would assist in the exploration of current cross-border leaders' and actors' beliefs regarding approaches that are conducive to leading and developing cross-border health collaborations. To this end, a 40-statement, Likert-type quantitative survey was developed based upon the qualitative research of Miller and Miller.<sup>31</sup> These researchers performed key informant interviews with executive level leaders who developed and coordinated collaborative organisations in various contexts. Their findings identified eight leadership styles/themes needed for collaborative leadership, including authentic self-awareness, passion/personal vision, communication for understanding, facilitator, relationship building, consultative decision-making, forging group vision and managing for action. The 5-point Likert scale rated importance of the 40 statements as follows; 5 Very Important, 4 Important, 3 Moderately Important, 2 Of little Importance, 1 Unimportant. Examples of statements from the survey include: *"Have a good understanding of the politics of any issue being considered by the group," "Be direct, open and honest in all communication within the group," and "Ensure that cross-border collaboration meetings are held in a neutral location and or equally held on each side of the border."*

27 Transfrontier Euro-InstituteNetwork (TIEN). <http://www.transfrontier.eu/> Date accessed June 2, 2016

28 Euro Institute. <http://www.euroinstitut.org/wFranzoesisch/1-Qui-sommes-nous/in-english.php> Date accessed June 2, 2016

29 Centre for Cross Border Studies. <http://crossborder.ie/> Date accessed June 2, 2016

30 Cooperation and Working Together for health gain and social wellbeing (CAWT) <http://www.cawt.com/default.aspx?CATID=1021> Date accessed July 1, 2016

31 Miller, W. R., & Miller, J. P. (2012). Leadership styles for success in collaborative work.

Survey participants were asked to rate these leadership approaches/statements in the context of: "if you have the chance to give advice to someone who will be leading a cross-border collaborative organisation or initiative please rate the importance of..." The survey was anonymous and offered in Spanish and English. People who worked as part of a binational cross-border collaborative group and/or performing cross-border work in the USA-Mexico border region were invited to participate. Executives at governmental cross-border health organisations at the federal, state and local levels on both sides of the border were contacted in order to email the survey link to all respondent candidates utilizing their organisations email listservs. The survey link was emailed to listservs (approximately 430 individuals) beginning on 1 March 2016, and the survey was closed on 8 April 2016.

## RESULTS

### Participant Demographics

One hundred individuals that work as part of a binational cross-border collaborative group or organisation participated in the survey resulting in a response rate of 23% (See Table 1). Thirty-three respondents were from Mexico and 67 were from the United States. One-half of respondents worked in the government sector (51%) and nearly-two thirds were female (60%). While 64% had more than six years of experience in a cross-border leadership role, 24% of the respondents had sixteen years of cross-border leadership experience. The remaining respondents, with one to five years of leadership experience, represented 28% and eight respondents (8%) had no cross-border leadership experience.

### Leadership Themes/Categories Restated

The leadership theme/category for both USA and Mexico that had the highest median factor score was *Communicate to Engage* (see Figure 1.). This indicates that survey respondents on both sides of the border agreed and rated these leadership statements/approaches and the resulting theme/category the highest of all the leadership themes/categories. More specifically, experienced border leaders and actors in this study shared that the leadership approaches/statements that make up this *Communication* theme/category were deemed either *Important* (4.0) and or *Very Important* (5.0) with a median score of 4.6, when given *the chance to give advice to someone who will be starting/leading a cross-border collaborative organisation or initiative*. Those leadership approaches/statements that were identified in this theme/category included: *"Be direct, open and honest in all communication within the group," "Show genuine appreciation for the work of others in the group," "Connect people and organisations with the resources they may need to be successful," "Ensure that members of the group that may be negatively affected by a decision are engaged in the decision*

**Table 1** Characteristics of border collaborative leadership survey respondents, USA and Mexico (n = 100)

Characteristic	United States (n=67)		Mexico (n = 33)		Total Sample (n= 100)
	n	%	n	%	n
<b>Survey language</b>					
English	64	95.5	3	9.1	67
Spanish	3	4.5	30	90.9	33
<b>Sector</b>					
Government	35	52.2	16	50	51
Academia	13	19.4	9	28.1	22
Non-Governmental Organisation	13	19.4	6	18.8	19
Private Organisation	5	7.0	2	3.1	7
Private Citizen	1	1.5	0	0.0	1
<b>Years in leadership position/role</b>					
0	7	10.5	1	3.0	8
1-5	17	25.4	11	33.3	28
6-10	13	19.4	10	30.3	23
11-15	11	16.4	6	18.2	17
16+	19	28.3	5	15.1	24
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	25	37.9	14	42.4	39
Female	42	62.1	19	57.6	61

*making process”, and “Set specific goals, objectives and create targeted outcomes related to the vision of the cross-border collaborative.” (Table 2)*

Upon performing an exploratory factor analysis (note: to obtain the methodology please contact the corresponding author, C. Matthews), results indicated that five of eight leadership themes/categories and 20 of the 40 survey statements/approaches had validity and were internally consistent. The resulting statistically-based five leadership themes/categories were renamed as follows: Communicate to Engage the Collaborative, Steer the Collaborative, Understand the Members of the Collaborative, Manage the Collaborative and Strategic Relationship Building for the Collaborative. The leadership themes/categories and the leadership approaches/statements identified as a result of the analysis can be seen below in Table 2.

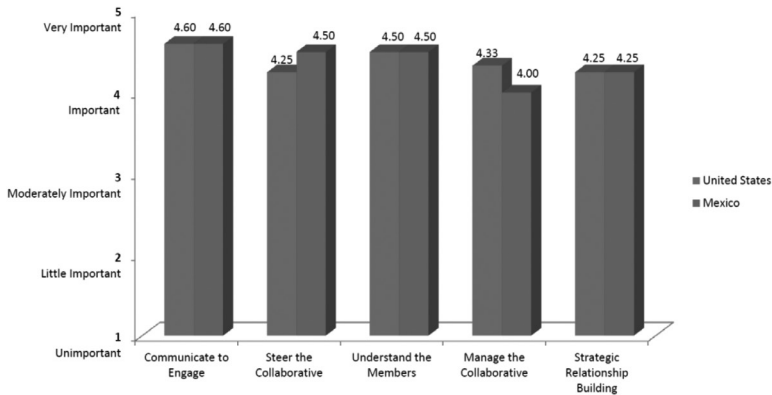
**Table 2** Border Collaboration Survey Categories and Statements

Category
<b>Communicate to Engage the Collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be direct, open and honest in all communication within the group</li> <li>• Show genuine appreciation for the work of others in the group</li> <li>• Connect people and organisations with the resources they may need to be successful</li> <li>• Ensure that members of the group that may be negatively affected by a decision are engaged in the decision making process</li> <li>• Set specific goals and objectives and create targeted outcomes related to the vision of the cross-border collaborative</li> </ul>
<b>Steer the Collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize a steering committee or some other small group to set the agenda prior to cross-border collaborative meetings</li> <li>• Ensure that the process for joining and participating in the steering committee should be open and transparent</li> <li>• Work to diversify the leadership of the steering committee and the cross-border collaborative as a whole (government, academia, non-profits)</li> <li>• Value the dissenting voice in a consensus decision</li> </ul>
<b>Understand the members of the collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the motives of cross-border collaboration members for being involved in the group</li> <li>• Have a good understanding of the politics of any issue being considered by the group</li> <li>• Identify and discuss cultural and political differences with the group membership</li> <li>• Ensure that the process of group visioning should address the concerns of the organisations involved in the cross-border collaborative</li> </ul>
<b>Manage the collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a governance structure through consensus</li> <li>• Challenge assumptions of how things have been done in the past and what new inventive solutions can be created</li> <li>• Ensure the cross-border collaborative membership knows that the collaborative belongs to them and not just the leadership</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic relationship building for the collaborative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be modest and share work credit with others in the cross-border collaborative group</li> <li>• Seek out those people who are easy to work with and willing to partner as opposed to people that are "non-collaborators"</li> <li>• Think creatively about who and how to engage individuals and organisations that do not typically work together</li> <li>• Ensure that cross-border collaboration meetings are held in a neutral location and or equally held on each side of the border</li> </ul>

The remaining four leadership theme/categories all were rated similarly high via the respondents of the Survey Likert Scale (rated 4.0 or above, Important or Very Important) by both USA and Mexico. No category medians differed more than .3 points. It should be noted that country median scores were equal in three out five categories

(i.e., “Communicate to Engage the Collaborative”, “Understand the Members of the Collaborative” and “Strategic Relationship Building.” (Figure 1) This indicates that there is considerable agreement on both sides of border (n=100) that the leadership approaches reflected in these 20 statements and five categories are perceived as vital in leading and building cross-border collaborations.

**Figure 1** Median Factor Score for USA-Mexico Border Collaboration Survey



## Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first quantitative exploratory study to examine attitudes and perceptions regarding leadership factors that contribute to successful border health collaboratives. The leadership approaches identified by the experienced cross-border health leaders and actors working in the USA-Mexico border can serve as a resource to support the development of cross-border health collaboratives in a border region.

With nearly a quarter of leaders surveyed (n=100, 24%) having over 16 years in a leadership role and 64% with over six years similar experience, there are similar results among more experienced leaders, as well as newer leaders. While this survey produced no apparent differences between countries, all respondents from both countries (n=100; Mexico=33, USA=67) rated the content in the theme “Communicate to Engage” the most important in the survey (USA 4.60, Mexico 4.60). In addition, within the theme “Manage the Collaborative” (USA 4.33, Mexico 4.0) leaders expressed that a governance structure developed through consensus in an atmosphere that fosters inventive solutions to problems is needed. Also, it was deemed important that the members of a border health collaboration need to feel they have a voice in the collaboration in addition to the leadership. The remaining three leadership themes, “Steer the Collaborative”, “Understand the Members,” and “Strategic Relationship Building,” were also deemed as key leadership approaches in the border collaborative setting (all median scores > 4.25). The approaches deemed important by the respondents including the following

elements: utilizing a diverse, steering type committee in an open way; understanding motivations of members' and their organisations' involvement to include political and cultural differences; and building relationships with people "ready" to work together, as well as meeting on neutral territory and/or equally on both sides of the border.

### Alignment with Existing Cross-Border Toolkits

Our findings align with and support significant reports and/or operational toolkits produced in Europe and in the USA-Mexico border region that assist cross-border leaders and actors in developing and performing border collaborative work.<sup>32,33,34,35</sup> This can be seen in several shared approaches: communication is expected to be open and transparent and face to face dialogue is highly valued; understanding cultural and political differences is foundational; a collaborative structure built upon a shared vision, consensus and *the right people and right structure* to include holding binational meetings in a neutral location or equally on each side of the border.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, in the PAT-TEIN *Toolkit for Inter-Cultural/Cross-Border Project Management* the authors not only discuss similar approaches for leading collaborative work, but become efficiently prescriptive in module six of their toolkit and lay out the key competencies of a cross-border project manager. This includes competency classifications, such as *Knowledge based competencies, Methodological competencies, Personal and Social skills, and Communication skills*.<sup>37</sup> All of the survey statements in our current study can be found within and in support of the Personal/Social and Communication skills sections of this comprehensive toolkit.

Past qualitative work as well as our findings suggest that *trust* is perceived as key to success amongst the border collaboration's members and that a collaborative process and structure is needed to address any number of shared cross-sector issues<sup>38,39</sup>. Extant literature reports that the process variables of trust building, commitment, shared understanding and face-to-face dialogue are at the core of collaborative leadership.<sup>40,41</sup>

### Use for Training Activities

Finally, providing training for present and future border collaborative leaders and actors is key to succession planning and the continuation of impacting the overall health and wellness of any border region.<sup>42,43</sup> Combined with current published cross-border

32 Denman See (19)

33 TEIN See (28)

34 Euro Institute See (28)

35 CCBS See (29)

36 Denman See (19)

37 CCBS See (29)

38 Matthews CE III, Wooten W, Rangel Gomez MG, Kozo J, Fernandez A and Ojeda VD (2015) The California border health collaborative: a strategy for leading the border to better health. *Front. Public Health* 3:141. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2015.00141.

39 Agranoff, R. (2003) *Leveraging Networks: A Guide for Public Managers Working Across Organizations*. IBM Endowment for the Business of Government: Arlington, Va.

40 CCBS See (29).

41 Miller See (31).

42 Denman See (19)

43 CCBS See (29)

reports and toolkits, the survey instrument from this study could be adapted or used in various ways to support leadership training in a cross-border context. This could include, but is not limited to the following:

- Having a training cohort of current or aspiring leaders in a classroom context take the survey and then use the individual or aggregate results in the class session as a tool for discussion for the entire group or in smaller groups.
- Trainees could take the survey and utilize it for introspective purposes (What do trainees/leaders feel is most important in developing a cross-border health collaborative and what are their own personal strengths in those identified leadership approaches?)
- Trainees could use the survey in a case study scenario and apply the survey statements to a fictitious or existing border collaborative and informally assess any evolving leadership issues to be addressed.

### Limitations

Some limitations should be considered when evaluating our findings. This study did not capture data on specific roles that participants held and a future survey instrument could capture individual data on participants' positions, responsibilities and resources available to do their job. Additionally, for a future survey we should include a larger sample size.

### Conclusion

As discussed throughout this paper and according to previous work by others, collaborative leadership is key in order to impact the health of the border region through border health collaborations. We found that both USA and Mexican cross-border health leaders agree significantly on the collaborative leadership approaches needed to impact the wellness of their border region. The approaches found to be important via our survey instrument fall within the themes of *Communicate to Engage the Collaborative*; *Steer the Collaborative*; *Understand the Members of the Collaborative*; *Manage the Collaborative*; and *Strategic Relationship Building for the Collaborative*. These findings significantly support other qualitative work (European cross-border reports and toolkits) as it relates to the collaborative leadership approaches identified as needed in this context. In addition, the findings can also be used to enhance cross-border leadership training activities. Future plans for this study will include validating the findings with a larger sample and including individualized respondent data and participant skills (e.g. bilingualism).

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# Revitalising Border Towns and Villages: Assets and potentiality in the Irish Border Region



**Ms Caroline Creamer and Dr Neale Blair**

*Towns and villages across this island of Ireland have in the past decade experienced rapid change and mixed fortunes. Many have, for example, been suffering from prolonged dereliction; a condition that has been exacerbated by edge-of-town developments, changing demographics including population decline, the (global) economic downturn and associated emigration and decline in disposal incomes, unsustainable suburban and one-off housing developments, and the new reality of the digital economy and e-commerce. While these trends highlight the changing needs and demands of society in terms of how we live, work and socialise, one cumulative effect has been increased vacancy as a result of the closure of retail and commercial units. Streetscapes across the island are losing their economic vitality. An often forgotten consequence of business closure is the loss of residential accommodation over the shop which, in turn, impacts negatively on the social viability of our towns and villages. Taken together, the beating heart of our towns and villages is slowly dying. This article aims to progress thinking on how to address the perennial challenges around the sustainable development of small towns and villages across the island of Ireland.*

## Introduction

Throughout Europe, rural areas are evolving in response to not only national but also international agendas that are influencing development patterns and shaping the function of towns and villages. The result is that there are many different types of spaces (and places) – from the very remote to the peri-urban – each with a different role to play, and varying challenges to face. Across the island of Ireland, small towns and villages are haemorrhaging not only in terms of population – which has implications for their social vibrancy – but also economically. In its 2008 report on the challenges and opportunities in connecting Irish border towns and villages, ICLRD argued that partnership approaches based on collaborative local governance and local flexibility are essential for border areas to overcome peripherality and develop the latent potentiality that exists (Creamer et al, xiv). Fast forward ten years, and what would have ‘ordinarily’ been a difficult set of local (and global) economic circumstances became even more testing as a consequence of the financial crisis tsunami and economic recession that engulfed most of Europe, North America and large parts of Asia, shortly after the ICLRD report was published. The report predicted that:

*"Cross-border cooperation and collaboration faces challenging times ahead. Funding programmes are changing direction while some schemes are coming to an end... With this drop in financial supports, increasing emphasis is about to be placed on activities becoming self-sustainable" (Creamer et al, 170).*

The well-documented effects of a decade of economic growth during the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years (Daly, 2016; Kirby, 2010) has been largely 'wiped-out' since the onset of the global financial/banking crisis in late 2007/early 2008. Up to this time, vulnerable peripheral areas benefited from economic development dynamics where the 'rising tide lifted all boats'<sup>1</sup>. Locations such as Clones, Blacklion-Belcoo, Lifford-Strabane, Ballyshannon, Dundalk-Newry benefited from the era of positivity and energy generated by the Peace Process (CCBS, December 2007; Creamer et al, 2008). The impact of the crisis would be equally dramatic and ubiquitous (Williams et al, 2010; Kitchin et al, 2012).

Yet, whilst identifying the profound challenges that exist, there continues to be significant opportunities in the assets available to rural communities, which can support sustainable development. Harnessing the potential of these assets will enhance the prospects of a vibrant future for these places, with economic recovery spinning out locally and island-wide. Achieving this will require a concerted effort not only from central, regional and local government but also community partnerships, rural enterprises, and national and regional (including cross-border) agencies with a rural development remit.

Given the unique position of small towns and villages along the border – lying at the interface of two jurisdictions – this article considers the changing profile of the challenges facing these communities and the adaptive nature of the policy environment in which they both occur and must be addressed. The article looks at the increasing significance being attached to strong leadership in the success of any re-imaginative and/or transformative agendas. The arguments as outlined are informed by research commissioned by the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), and carried out by ICLRD in 2015. This research aimed to provide guidance to delivery agents, including local and regional government, on actions necessary to overcome the needs, issues and obstacles facing development in border towns and villages. In publishing its *Regional Strategic Framework for the Central Border Region 2012-2027* (RSF) (2013), ICBAN emphasised the importance of rural towns, villages and surrounding hinterlands to the continued vibrancy of the area and argued that new approaches to the regeneration of these same towns and villages who face a unique set of challenges was urgently required. But critical questions remain for such strategies: what are the new approaches; who is responsible for their design; and who are the delivery agents? In this article, we discuss the character of the Irish border region, consider the types of regeneration practice that have occurred and scope the key challenges that lie ahead as identified by policy makers and practitioners. Significant emphasis has been placed on creating comprehensive

1 This does not signify equity of transformation; weaker areas continue to play 'catch-up'.

strategies that are led by evidence and supported through a wide constituency base. The task now, as historically the case, is the implementation of these strategies.

### **An Evolving Policy Environment**

In policy terms, there is a growing belief across local government on the island of Ireland that all the pieces of the jigsaw required to deliver on successful regeneration programmes – with a medium- to longer-term perspective – are falling into place (Cummins, 2016). The *Programme for Government* for Ireland recognises the need for revitalisation programmes to benefit the country as a whole; and to this end have established a Ministry for Regional Development and Rural Affairs. Other initiatives promoted included a town and village renewal scheme (launched in August 2016), a database of derelict sites (in train) and, in recognition of the role of the community and voluntary sector in the revitalisation of both urban and rural areas, the provision of further funding for this sector. The *Draft Programme for Government* for Northern Ireland similarly calls for increased innovation in the economy, improved regional balance of economic prosperity, and increased confidence and capability of people and communities across the region. Both plans call for improved access and connectivity across both jurisdictions – especially in terms of broadband access and rural transport. Other initiatives of importance to small town revitalisation include the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) report (2014); the Rural Charter (2015); and the LEADER aspect of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 – the focus of which is on continuing to facilitate diversification of the economic base of rural areas through enterprise/job creation, promotion of local development, enhanced accessibility and high quality ICT, and town renewal. It is also very much to the fore of local government thinking that programmes of activity under LEADER must be congruent with other existing and emerging strategic plans and strategies – such as Community Plans in Northern Ireland and Local Economic and Community Plans in Ireland.

Through the local government reform programmes, and associated legislation and strategies, local authorities across the island are refocusing their activities to community and economic development. The development of the aforementioned Community Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans are promoting local and community development through a more coordinated and collaborative approach (Cummins, 2016). These plans are charged with building on councils' existing economic and community development work; and enhancing local involvement and inputs while being consistent with the policies and objectives of the other development strategies. In terms of town and village revitalisation, both plans place an emphasis on a strong 'place-related' approach to economic growth and supporting community development.

Within the Irish border region, there are a number of policies, strategies and frameworks in-situ which could act as a starting point for such an integrated whole-of-place approach. ICBAN's own *Regional Strategic Framework 2013-2027* recognises the many strengths and assets of the Irish border region – from natural environment to cultural heritage to the resilience of its people in the face of decades of underinvestment and lost generations.

Through this joint strategy and agenda, the councils of the central border region came together with a shared vision of a sustainable region. Achievement of this shared vision is dependent on towns and villages throughout the region becoming centres of service provision – both public and private – for their wider hinterlands or ‘functional areas’. However, delivery of the RSF is a challenging job given the various agendas at play, particularly as there are no formal structures for implementation of the RSF – an advisory document – but which has significant potentiality. Complementary to ICBAN’s Framework is the concept of the ‘Border Development Corridor’ and the *draft Solidarity Charter for the Economic Revitalisation of the Irish Border Development Corridor*. The Charter promotes the principle of subsidiarity and is designed to complement and support the work of existing agencies with a local and regional development remit in the Irish border region including local government and local development partnerships (CCBS, 2014). Whilst it was hoped the Charter would inform future regional – and local – policies and practice, it too has made no further progress to-date.

These examples clearly demonstrate the desire by various stakeholders to respond to the development challenges generally and the border region in particular. Going forward, though, it is also recognised that the interrelated nature of the challenges facing rural Ireland – irrespective of borders – can only be addressed through an integrated strategic and operational approach that aligns the goals of national level economic plans with regional, county and local (bottom-up) strategies (CEDRA, 2014). Operationalising this approach requires joined-up thinking and further consideration of ‘how’ to enable the ‘what’ identified by CEDRA; more on this later.

### **The Irish Border Region**

The Irish border region is predominantly rural in nature, characterised by a dispersed population and distance from major urban centres including Belfast, Dublin and Derry/Londonderry. The network of towns, villages and hamlets across the region, together with its many environmental assets and associated quality of life attributes, provide the region with a distinctive character. At the same time, it is a region characterised by ongoing weaknesses in infrastructure and economic development – in part a legacy of the Troubles and decades of ‘back-to-back’ planning – resulting in underinvestment in critical infrastructures, peripherality from Dublin and Belfast and a pervasive sense of disadvantage. As noted by the ICLRD (2015), border towns and villages are stagnating and hollowing-out. Emigration, both to elsewhere on the island and internationally, is rife. The character and economic structure of towns and villages is changing; shops and pubs are closing down – some of which had previously existed for generations – and essential services such as health, banking, policing, schools and post offices are being rationalised. For many settlements there is no longer a night-time economy. Social clubs including the GAA are struggling to remain viable. The degree of public transport services required to bring people to and from the services they require on a daily or weekly basis do not exist for the most part – especially in more rural, remote areas. Visually, these settlements are becoming increasingly unattractive due to the run-down and unkempt nature of empty properties along main thoroughfares – which in turn has a

knock-on effect for attracting future potential investment (see Figure 1). This, together with currency fluctuations and diverging VAT (and other taxes), and commercial rates, impacts significantly on the economies of these rural communities. The net effect is that increasingly, vibrant larger urban towns and cities are sitting uneasily beside ageing, rural communities (*Irish Independent*, 29 March 2014).

**Figure 1:** The challenges of vacancy, decline and dereliction facing border towns and villages

### Clonmellon on the Meath/Westmeath border



### Kingscourt, Cavan



### Aughnacloy



More recently, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU (process known as BREXIT) has raised further concerns around the future status of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland and potential implications for free movement of people and trade. Questions also arise around healthcare, education and shared emergency services for





*(Source: Authors own).*

example. While the implications of Brexit are still largely unknown, there are already signs that it will be those small towns and villages in the border area that will be most adversely affected. In response, identifying and rolling-out those previously referenced new approaches to regeneration is more important than ever.

### Regeneration in Practice

Successful regeneration is largely based on making (maximum) utility from the strengths that exist in a town or village. It is also, according to Carley (2000) dependent on a modern local government system, a regional strategic framework and effective national policy. Dixon et al (2011) argue that there are multiple critical success factors for regeneration: recognising the recession as an opportunity, adopting a long-term vision, developing strong branding, building strong partnerships, promoting integrated development, and getting infrastructure into place. Stockdale (2006) argues that migration is a pre-requisite for rural economic regeneration, that a rural endogenous development policy on its own will have limited success in regenerating areas experiencing on-going depopulation.

In an analysis of both urban and rural regeneration programmes in Northern Ireland, Muir notes the fragmented nature of many such programmes; with this fragmentation taking many different forms.

*“for example: a large number of initiatives; several initiatives taking place in the same areas concurrently; areas receiving funding from different programmes; time-limited project funding; displacement of expenditure from mainstream budgets. All raise questions about the extent of genuine additionality” (Muir, 2014: 1).*

The same could be argued of regeneration schemes across Ireland. This, however, is not to infer that they did not bring about improvements in the condition of places or impact positively on the lives of people living in these areas. The outputs of many were impressive in terms of physical improvements and job creation. What is not always clear is the sustainability of these outcomes.

Along the Irish border, programmes such as the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), INTERREG, PEACE and LEADER/LEADER+ have played an important role in town and village renewal. Initiatives noted for their contribution to the renewal of border towns and villages include:

- Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme (CRISP) initiatives of the 1990s which was operated by the Department of Environment (NI) and continued by the (then) District Councils;
- Supporting Urban and Village Renewal schemes co-financed by EU and national funding;
- Investment for Villages Programme supported under the Rural Development Programme;
- Youth projects including back to education, skills and training under ESF and PEACE; and
- Rural tourism/agri-food initiatives and associated local enterprise development under LEADER and INTERREG.

Over the past six years, with the full impact of the economic crisis coming to light and the ever-evolving nature of the digital economy, the scale and complexity of the challenges facing small towns and villages has often proven to be too much for communities in their broadest sense to tackle. As part of our research programme with ICBAN, respondents observed that community spirit has faded (ICLRD, 2015). Local government finances have been repeatedly cut – both centrally and through loss of local revenues. Central government policy, especially in Ireland, has largely tended to focus on macro-economic rather than local issues – a knee-jerk yet perfectly understandable reaction to the global economic crisis.

The generally accepted principal is that regeneration schemes by their nature are resource heavy in the initial years and then follow their own momentum. But with other internal and external processes at play – such as globalisation and public sector austerity – the outcomes of such schemes are not always as initially envisaged. Generally, it is felt that a lot of the initiatives over the past decade in the Irish border region have had limited success in terms of the sustained regeneration of their wider communities (ICLRD, 2015). Projects have tended to be very local and time-limited in nature, having an immediate impact in terms of drawing visitors to the region and/or increasing confidence in the local community but with this dynamic then dwindling over time as maintenance resources are not available. The wider regional impact that was desired has, in most cases, not been realised. New thinking is therefore required to achieve greater success.

### The New Challenges

Previous research into local regeneration programmes indicates that many initiatives – often government initiated – have “failed to match the process of regeneration to the local challenges faced” (Powe et al, 2015). The *Regional Strategic Framework* (RSF) as published by ICBAN (2013) and the CEDRA Report both call for new approaches to the regeneration of towns and villages and integrated service delivery in rural areas using a variety of different approaches including social enterprise. In particular, CEDRA proposed a vision of rural Ireland as a:

*“...dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sectoral economy supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life with an energised relationship between rural and urban Ireland which will contribute to its sustainability for the benefit of society as a whole”* (CEDRA, 2014: 13).

More recently, in an article in the *Sunday Herald* in September 2016, Kevin Murray<sup>2</sup> considered the five drivers of change that will impact on whether towns in Scotland

2 Kevin Murray is director of Kevin Murray Associates (KMA), an award-winning consultancy operating across the spectrum of spatial planning, regeneration, urban design and community consultation. Established in 2002, the practice draws from over 30 years’ direct experience in leading edge projects in town planning, regeneration, urban design and economic development.

will prosper or not over the next 10-20 years; noting that these drivers are “all in a delicate state of ‘push-pull’ tension” (11 September 2016). The drivers, or challenges depending on your point of view, resonate with the findings of our research and are equally applicable to small towns and villages on the island of Ireland, including the central border region:

- **Democratic churn or gentle decline:** Can small towns and villages attract new people, particularly younger people and economically active people – bringing with them a vitality and increased purchasing power<sup>3</sup>?. And what is necessary to make this happen – more outdoor activity, technology, new types of employment and housing, etc?
- **New economic roles v. dormitory function:** In a growing digital age, moving to new economic functions will require access to high speed internet and technology – whether in micro-brewing, engineering, digital design, creative sector, etc. Without this, towns will be restricted to a dormitory housing function. Towns not creating jobs will find themselves home to an older, ageing population – lacking the economic activity required for survival.
- **Townscape modernisation or conservation:** Smaller towns and villages can become trapped in their former roles and identities. To survive in the 21st century, they need to find new ones. Ways must be found to breathe new life into old buildings, to adapt them to new ways of working and living. Ideally, it should not be a case of modernise versus conserve but rather a process of progressive and creative conservation.
- **Creative identity versus anytown:** Towns are increasingly characterised by buildings and estates of similar design. They become indistinctive from each other. Challenging this requires an investment in the creative types who provide poetry, artwork, festivals, a store – taken together, a place’s identity.
- **The challenge of leadership and governance:** Critical to the sustained future of small towns and villages is strong leadership, partnership and the collective energy that embodies the aspirations of its citizens, businesses and voluntary community (Murray, 2016).

Murray (2016) continues that the approach of each town must be driven by its specificities, identity and links with other areas. In addition, Powe et al (2015) contend that to be successful, regeneration schemes for small towns must be locally-led and long-term, with the process adopted matching the challenge. Central to this is (a) building an understanding of the issues faced by each town through analysis – recognising that towns vary in terms of history, geography, political and policy context, entrepreneurial activity, etc. (Powe and Hart, 2008) – and then (b) working with the existing building blocks of each place.

3 Murray argues that the purchasing power of the postwar babyboomer generation (the silver economy) will fade over time; that short- to medium-term strategies should not only focus on the spending power of the silver economy. This is too short-sighted.

As part of its work programme with ICBAN, the ICLRD carried out a needs analysis for the region in mid-2015. This needs analysis, the purpose of which was to identify potential areas of action to enable sustainable development, was informed by discussions with representatives from the eight councils that make up the Network and supported by other sources of evidence, including the *Border Regional Planning Guidelines* (BRA, 2010). It was based on identifying the gap that exists between the current position (what is) and the idealised future situation (what should be) (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995).

There was a high level of correlation around the issues and challenges recorded by the ICBAN councils as still facing border towns and villages. From the needs analysis, five core themes emerged: Employment opportunities/business development; Connectivity; Education, skills and training; Local assets and comparative advantage; and Community (see Table 1). Of the top five challenges facing the region, the main issue highlighted centred on employment opportunities/business development – sub-themes of this being:

- Employment opportunities, with this including associated challenges of Euro/Sterling currency differentials;
- Family succession within businesses;
- Overall confidence in an area; and
- The ongoing debt burden of entrepreneurs (ICLRD, 2015).

Other challenges highlighted as facing not only border towns and villages but many rural settlements included connectivity, access to services, community deficits – both social and physical, and depopulation especially with regards to ‘young flight’, the outward movement of young people accessing third level education and employment opportunities (ICLRD, 2015).

Respondents noted uneven development is prevalent throughout the Irish border region. While some of the larger towns are experiencing an improvement in their situation, showing signs of economic resurgence and recovery, this tends to be more expressed in certain sectors over others. Within the central border region, there are a growing number of towns that are demonstrating a renewed confidence, an ultimate prerequisite for economic growth, and others that remain in a spiral of decline; thus supporting the inference that the recovery as it is being played out on the ground is not equitable. Rather, this is a two- if not three-tier recovery with smaller towns and villages, and indeed border towns and villages, lagging significantly behind.

**Table 1:** The top five socio-economic challenges facing border towns and villages

The Socio-Economic Challenges Facing Border Towns and Villages	
1.	<b>Employment Opportunities</b> including: currency differentials, family succession within businesses, overall confidence in an area and the ongoing debt burden of entrepreneurs
2.	<b>Connectivity</b> including: broadband, infrastructure - road, rail and ports, air access, public transport incl. rural transport schemes
3.	<b>Access to Services</b> including: migration/rationalisation of services, shop closures, budget cuts reducing disposable income
4.	<b>Community Deficits</b> including: low income/education, lack of equality of opportunity, dereliction and general aesthetics of place which has implications for future investment
5.	<b>Depopulation</b> including: ageing profile, 'young flight' through national and international emigration

*(Source: Based on interviews with Council Representatives, 2015)*

The challenge now is how to extend the confidence of larger urban settlements into smaller towns and villages – and indeed, to understand if such confidence can be translated at all given the other pressures (often historic and persistent) facing smaller and more rural settlements. The CEDRA Report (2014) contends that such transference can happen, noting the different roles rural communities and small towns and villages can play – albeit to varying capacities – in driving economic growth as the island emerges from the economic down-turn.

**The Leaders**

For the Irish border region, local authority-led cross-border networks, including ICBAN, the North West Region Cross Border Group<sup>4</sup> and the East Border Region Ltd (EBR), have been credited with making significant contributions to the increasing interactions between local government, the community and voluntary sector and the business sector in a broad swathe of areas that support the continued viability of small towns and villages within their respective operational areas<sup>5</sup>. In a contribution to this Journal in

4 This Group has now been subsumed into new collaborative structures in the North West, led by Donegal County Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council.

5 Across the Irish border region, dedicated partnerships were established from the 1970s onwards in response to the difficulties imposed by the border. These included, for example, the local authority-led cross-border networks comprising elected representatives from all political parties and senior officials from the relevant local authorities.

2015, however, it was noted by the Chief Executive of EBR Ltd that the future of the cross-border bodies has never been in more doubt (Arthurs, 2015). This is attributable to a number of factors – the changing nature and focus of EU programmes such as INTERREG, the financial constraints facing local government and the loss of experience due to retirements under the local government reform programme.

In addition to the cross-border networks, local governments across the island recognise they have a (continued) role to play in the development and renewal of areas within their respective jurisdictions. Through social innovation and inter-agency collaboration, local government has a key role to play in the revitalisation of border towns and villages in cooperation with central government departments, community and business people. This requires greater coherency and consistency across policies with planning and (increasingly) economic development taking the lead; better use of existing funds; and strong political and managerial leadership. The aforementioned Community Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans are viewed as critical in this regard. But this body of leaders too face many challenges in their day-to-day operations. Councils, North and South, are under severe financial constraints. In Northern Ireland, councils remain restricted in their regeneration efforts by the then Department for Social Development (DSD) Minister's decision not to devolve such powers to the newly formed structures in April 2015 as originally planned. Despite this, there is a growing recognition across both jurisdictions of the need for a more strategic approach to renewal measures at both a local government and regional level, a point emphasised by CEDRA (2014).

Central to the achievement of sustainable economic regeneration is the involvement of strong businesses and astute business owners who are prepared to adapt to changing markets and adopt the mantle of leader and mentor. In revitalising towns and villages, both councils and businesses largely recognise that there are two core elements to economic sustainability: jobs and incomes (ICLRD, 2015). Yet both have been adversely affected since the global economic downturn and credit crunch of the late 2000's, a downturn which has impacted severely on the traditional employment base of the border region economy: construction, engineering and manufacturing industries. The recession has also seen a number of infrastructure and regeneration projects involving redevelopment and/or rehabilitation not been progressed due to the private and/or public investment required not being readily available. Businesses too face challenges around access to finance; with any spare capacity they might have once had now being (re)focused on business survival.

Communities themselves lie very much at the heart of small towns and villages. Comments from interviewees suggested that, in general terms, the more vibrant and engaged the community, the more successful the town will be in terms of its sustained vitality. Evidence from elsewhere reinforces the point that embedded community culture has a direct impact on levels of entrepreneurial activity (Huggins and Thompson, 2014). Indeed, a greater emphasis is being placed by communities in the Irish border region on the need to strategise rather than be funding-led, recognising that projects which are

successful in receiving funding must be part of a bigger picture rather than regarded as an end in itself.

Indeed, contributors to the ICBAN study emphasised the need for towns and villages to create niche, marketable identities and also have a strong voice because of competition for limited resources and investment. With the financial constraints facing councils, communities recognise that on the one hand they will have to lessen their dependence on the local authorities in terms of provision of services and remedial works whilst at the same time working closer with the council to ensure the value-added of strategic development initiatives. Examples of where this could happen were tabled by the ICBAN councils and included: economic strategies, recreation/tourism strategies, and shared services programmes (ICLRD, 2015). In the context of economic sustainability, there is a broad consensus that small towns and villages in the central border area must increasingly take responsibility for keeping their local services viable. This links back to the choices people make in terms of where they want to live and the 'costs' associated with that lifestyle decision.

### **The Process**

Previous studies by the ICLR (Creamer et al., 2008; 2009) have explored the complex nature of development in rural towns and villages in the Irish border region. Whilst common ingredients of good practice can be identified, there is an acknowledgement at all levels of policy-making that there is no "one size fits all" solution to the challenges facing small towns and villages. Rather, the opportunities and challenges must be considered within the unique context of existing assets and potentiality, set against a strategic backdrop; in the central border region this is the development plans of the councils – supported by the RSF. This, together with the findings of the ICLR's recent study on small town revitalisation, emphasises the need for, and importance of partnership. Previously, this tended to be primarily focused on public-private cooperation with varying degrees of community involvement. The ICLR's research highlights the importance of community participation – individuals as well as groups – from project initiation. This, it is contended, will assist in both accessing and enhancing those assets, hard and soft, that provide the pillars necessary for sustainable development (ICLRD, 2015).

What is emerging as a model for future initiatives aimed at revitalising the border region in many ways builds on existing practice but adopts a broader (strategic) and deeper (participatory) approach to the governance of, and the spaces between, towns and villages. Particularly, this takes the form of an approach that is:

- Multi-faceted: in terms of the range of actions/activities and how these connect;
- Multi-dimensional: in terms of community-public-private partnership;
- Multi-scalar: in terms of operating across different levels of government and agencies.



There is, though, nothing new in these findings except that community involvement, now better recognised as a key asset, is currently the weakest (and yet perhaps most crucial) link in terms of how the voluntary and community sector is aligned with the activities of other delivery agents and specifically their statutory role in development. Comments from interviewees highlighted a dichotomy that exists between public sector stakeholders who expect an increasing role to be played by the community sector and community workers who consider they are under-resourced and not fully integrated into decision- and policy-making processes. The focus, going forward, is how to bridge this gap.

### **Network governance: an approach that can deal with the challenges?**

A recurring theme from community and business respondents was a request for better understanding by the public sector of the operating conditions faced by private and third sectors. These sectors also argued for processes that enable a greater level of engagement not only in framing plans and policies but also in their delivery. At the same time, local and central government respondents point towards their emphasis on meaningful consultation and on-going rapprochement with other sectors. Taking both perspectives and experiences as valid, we propose that adopting a modified network governance approach could provide a vehicle for resolving some of the complex issues in revitalisation of border towns and villages identified earlier (see Table 1). The concept of network governance has emerged as “the set of conscious steering attempts or strategies of actors within governance networks intended to influence interaction processes and/or the characteristics of these networks” (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016, p.160). Indeed a “prime function” of governance network structures is to mediate the disparate agendas of public and private actors (Hidle and Normann, 2013, p.116) and provide a solution to problems linked to the provision of public goods and services (Mu and de Jong, 2016, p.56). What we are proposing in the modified approach is that the range of actors be formally recognised as going beyond official government structures that enables meaningful engagement.

The network governance approach must also contend with externalities – such as central government priorities, budget constraints and personnel – which means that interactions amongst actors occur in “unexpected ways, generating unforeseen results” (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016, p.160). This is extrapolated in Rhodes’ (2007) explanation of governance *inter alia* as a continuing set of interactions between network members, and the presence of trust which is a part of game-like negotiation between members. Trust becomes an even more complex issue in the Irish border context of inter-communal conflict, division and physical separation during the Troubles resulting from road closures and other military operations. Furthermore, what differentiates networks of actors from network governance is their participation in “collective decision-making and the social steering of behaviour” (Parker, 2007, p.118). Research demonstrates (potential) significant gains from the network governance approach including efficiencies in being proactive, consensus-based and reduced risk of implementation resistance (Sorensen and Torfing, 2007) that harnesses the involvement of relevant actors (Van Bortel et al.,

2009) and which amongst other benefits manages uncertainty and provides access to expertise not otherwise available (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004). There are, though, risks associated with the approach:

*"...The potential efficiency gains of governance networks can only be fully realized in well-functioning governance networks. Changes in the composition of the network actors, the presence of unresolved tensions and conflicts, weak and ineffective leadership, frustration over the lack of clear and visible results, and external events that disturb the policy process can destabilize governance networks and turn them into malfunctioning talking shops (Sorensen and Torfing, 2007, p.13).*

Literature also points to the evolving nature of involvement by actors during the operational lifespan of a network, with Kirschbaum (2015) arguing that "non-governmental stakeholders might not be as participative as originally assumed, while retaining the right to participate" (p.445). Along with other factors this may lead to cycles of failure and readjustment – potentially positive in the final analysis – but not abandonment in the legitimacy of the network, suggesting that flexibility in network governance design is critical for the delivery of core objectives. Indeed, this commentary on the cyclical character resonates with findings from Nelles and Durand (2014) who describe cross-border governance as an "art rather than a science" (p.119) where adaptation and innovation in cooperative processes is critical but which are vulnerable to dominant regional and central governments and changing circumstances and agendas at these scales.

## Conclusions

To conclude, we suggest that adopting a network governance approach – modified to reflect the dynamics of the Irish border region – is a "suitable response to the question of how to tackle fragmented and conflict-ridden policy problems" (Mu and de Jong, 2016, p.57). We see potential for greater community and private sector participation within formalised structures associated with network governance. Implementation of this approach is, though, subject to a variety of conditions. Lessons from urban regeneration demonstrates how both structural factors (for example: neighbourhood type; municipality size) and agency factors (such as: actor mobilisation; interaction; participation) impact on the development of public policy and strategy (Pares et al., 2014).

As highlighted earlier in this paper, the development issues faced in the Irish border region are complex. Attempts have been made to address and overcome these challenges but history demonstrates that no single answer exists. Indeed, where comprehensive responses have been formulated, for example in the form of strategic frameworks, delivery is problematic. Nevertheless, our evidence points to the fact that actors and agencies continue to have a desire-driven willingness to move forward and not allow decline and dereliction to become an inevitable dynamic that plays out in

border towns and villages. Respondents also had a sense of urgency, that time is limited and that potential negative impacts from global economic conditions and BREXIT loom on the horizon.

In summary, our research argues that the revitalisation of border towns and villages is dependent on the entrepreneurial, environmental and cultural assets in the immediate vicinity, ranging from the innovativeness of the business community, creative industries, agri-food and activity tourism; to the lakes, mountains, bogs and marine; to monastic, literary and rural retreats and festivals. Our findings, both in 2008 and more recently, highlight the very rich community resource in the unlikely of places, and in the unlikely of ways in the face of adversity, but which urgently needs support. Looking ahead, there is a need to address recurring issues around policy and strategy implementation, going beyond the proverbial “talking shop,” an interviewee noted. One part of this is to join up the dots amongst the strategies, work and resources across government, private sector and community sector. Both the third and private sectors have lots to offer in this process, but both need to feel to be valued; a network governance approach may be a suitable vehicle. This needs to be tested in more detail to scope the appropriate scale, participation and structures necessary for effective implementation, adopting where appropriate lessons from practice elsewhere and reflecting on experience in Irish border towns and villages.

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# The Management of Heritage in Contested Cross-border Contexts: Emerging research on the island of Ireland



**Andrew G McClelland**

*This paper introduces the recently begun REINVENT research project focused on the management of heritage in the cross-border cultural landscape of Derry/Londonderry. The importance of facilitating dialogue over cultural heritage to the maintenance of 'thin' borders in contested cross-border contexts is underlined in the paper, as is the relatively favourable strategic policy context for progressing 'heritage diplomacy' on the island of Ireland. However, it is argued that more inclusive and participatory approaches to the management of heritage are required to assist in the mediation of contestation, particularly accommodating a greater diversity of 'non-expert' opinion, in addition to helping identify value conflicts and dissonance. The application of digital technologies in the form of Public Participation Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS) is proposed, and this is briefly discussed in relation to some of the expected benefits and methodological challenges that must be addressed in the REINVENT project. The paper concludes by emphasising the importance of dialogue and knowledge exchange between academia and heritage policymakers/practitioners.*

## Introduction

The EU referendum debate (henceforth Brexit) in the UK starkly revealed the distance and mistrust between people and the political establishment, exposing suspicions of expert knowledge while confirming societal differences based on geography, demography and other socio-economic indicators. Talk of disruption and division has permeated the media over recent years, and where heightened political rhetoric and the apparent weight of public opinion appears to lead, policy tends to follow. For example, the 'refugee crisis' in the summer of 2015 led swiftly to the reactive reintroduction of border controls (and fences) in many places and the de facto suspension of the Dublin Regulation concerning asylum seekers seeking international protection. Not unrelated, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, attention on the island of Ireland is largely centred on the possible return of a 'hard' border. Although this eventuality is presented as a remote prospect, the centrality of immigration to the Brexit question ensures that the prospective status of the UK's only land border with an(other) EU member state will inevitably be subject to the vagaries of public opinion and decision-making processes elsewhere. Hence, boundaries and borders are firmly back on the political agenda in spite of (or because of) their increasing invisibility due to globalisation, European integration, and, more locally, the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Although the UK's leave process

will have potentially profound implications for the subject matter discussed, Brexit is not the predominant focus here. Rather, drawing initially on Haselsberger's (2014) discussion of 'thick' and 'thin' borders, this article introduces a recently begun research project focused on the challenges pertaining to the management of cultural heritage in contested cross-border contexts – 'Re-inventory-ing Heritage: Exploring the potential of public participation GIS to capture heritage values and dissonance' (REINVENT).<sup>1</sup>

It is recognised that all borders are complex phenomena consisting of overlapping sociocultural, economic and environmental boundaries and spaces; rarely coinciding with geopolitical and administrative lines on a map. The permeability of European borders to the flow of people, goods, services and capital has markedly improved over recent decades, but the 'top down' drivers of these processes ensures that they predominantly relate to geopolitical and administrative borders. In contested border regions, however, where difficult questions of heritage and identity are frequently to the fore, Haselsberger (2014, p.506) underlines the importance of simultaneously negotiating 'new relational geographies' relevant to sociocultural and environmental boundaries and spaces. Facilitating such 'soft spaces' for cooperation from the 'bottom up', in essence, 'allows different forms of coexistence to emerge and flourish irrespective of the underlying state border', with cultural heritage representing one arena where 'relational thinking' can usefully be applied in cross border contexts (Haselsberger, 2014, p.510). Thus, the REINVENT project critically engages with participatory practices and the application of digital mapping technologies to capturing a plurality of heritage values ascribed by a range of communities, taking the cross-border cultural landscape of Derry/Londonderry as the principal case study focus.

Furthering cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland and maintaining the 'thinness' of the border, as the introduction above alludes, requires that policymakers pay attention to the management of cultural heritage. This article initially considers the issues of contestation and cooperation in relation to heritage, which, for Winter (2015, p.998), represent 'two sides of the same coin'. The policy space for cross-border cooperation on heritage on the island of Ireland is subsequently the focus of attention, referencing emergent concepts such as 'heritage diplomacy'. The next section addresses the application of digital technologies within cultural heritage management with particular reference to Public Participation GIS (PPGIS), which it is argued can bring a new dynamic to traditional heritage inventories and values-based approaches to their management.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, methodological challenges must be overcome to successfully utilise this technology. The penultimate section elaborates upon the selection of the cross-border cultural landscape of Derry/Londonderry as a case study focus, highlighting the richness of its cultural heritage and some of the related issues of contestation that it exemplifies. Finally, the key expected outputs and outcomes of

1 Haselsberger (2014, p.507) explains that 'the more boundaries a border is comprised of (meaning the more functions are imposed on one particular line in space), the "thicker" or harder and even oppressive' it becomes. Thus, thick borders are extremely 'rigid' whereas thin borders are 'permeable'.

2 PPGIS is defined as 'the practice of having non-experts or the lay public identify spatial information to augment expert geographic information systems (GIS) data' (Brown et al., 2014, p.191).



the REINVENT project are outlined in the conclusion, which emphasises the reciprocal benefits of pursuing academic and heritage policymaker/practitioner dialogue and knowledge exchange.

### **A contested phenomenon**

Cultural heritage is at the heart of the European agenda and is recognised as ‘an irreplaceable repository of knowledge and a valuable resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion’ (European Commission, 2014, p.2). The positive values typically associated with heritage are recognised in numerous international, national and local charters and conventions, policy documents, research and advocacy reports.<sup>3</sup> Heritage is frequently central to regeneration and place-making initiatives, while, at a personal level, it is taken to be a critical component in the formation of identity, whether national or otherwise. However, heritage is also an inherently ‘dissonant’ or contested concept, created through a process of selection – historically by the state – subject to inevitable tensions deriving from its use (and abuse) as a cultural, political and economic resource, and occasionally the locus of outright hostility and violence (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996).<sup>4</sup> There are numerous examples of the latter, with the recent destruction of monuments across the Middle East and Africa a manifestation of conflict underscoring the symbolism of cultural heritage sites. Such conflict, of course, is not only associated with contemporary expressions of violence, but arises in relation to the continued management of the physical reminders of an uncomfortable past, like the ‘undesirable heritage’ surviving in Germany from the Nazi-era (Macdonald, 2006). Indeed, the global popularity of ‘dark tourism’ and the touristic consumption of ‘sites of atrocity’ poses significant management challenges, with the recent banning of Pokémon Go at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum indicative of the sensitivities involved (see Figure 1). Such difficulties surrounding ‘conflict heritage’ remain an unresolved issue in the Northern Irish context (see, for example, McDowell, 2008; Flynn, 2011; Hocking, 2015), and although cultural tourism helps sustain heritage and many local economies worldwide, it physically erodes fragile sites and can severely disrupt the sacred and deeply held beliefs of many people.

3 See, for instance, the Council of Europe’s Faro Convention; the 2015 *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* report, and; the Department of Environment-commissioned *Study of the Economic Value of Northern Ireland’s Historic Environment*.

4 Dissonance relates to issues of discordance and disinheritance that are argued to be integral to the concept of heritage. By way of (stark) illustration, the ‘creation’ of any heritage ‘actively or potentially disinherits or excludes those who do not subscribe to, or are embraced within, the terms of meaning defining that heritage’ (Graham et al., 2000, p.24).

**Figure 1:** Tourists gathering at the entrance to the Auschwitz I concentration camp, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979. Photo taken in 2009.



*Source: Author*

Several other prominent tensions are associated with critiques of traditional approaches to cultural heritage management. Firstly, concerns have been expressed over the potential reinforcement of social exclusion, whether along socio-economic or ethno-religious lines. The question of 'whose heritage to conserve' is particularly resonant in multicultural and diverse societies (Tunbridge, 1984), while gentrification remains an attendant danger in many heritage-led (and other) regeneration projects often causing the pricing-out or displacement of poorer citizens (Ripp and Rodwell, 2015). For instance, Gard'ner (2004) discusses the needs and aspirations of ethnic minority groups in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, focusing on the designation and protection of sites of importance to the Bangladeshi community. He argues that without proactively recognising 'what different communities value within their environment, the built heritage of these groups will continue to be ignored or only recognised as part of our common heritage by chance' (Gard'ner, 2004, p.88). As such, heritage agencies are paying increasing attention to the history and stories of a more diverse range of people, whether they cohere around race, religion, gender, class or sexuality. Different communities will ultimately value different things, differently, of course, but gaining nuanced understandings of diverse place-attachments is inevitably difficult to achieve if they are not actively included within the conversation.

Secondly, the over-privileging of expert over non-expert opinions has been the subject of sustained critiques as certain types of heritage are inevitably afforded 'official' status at the expense of others. Thus, traditional heritage inventories tend to reflect value-sets that are mostly hierarchical in nature, representing a relatively narrow and limited range of 'elite' values, and typically associated with straightforward expressions of architectural and historic interest (Clark, 2002). In the Irish context, Parkinson et al. (2016, p.294) contend that 'expert/elite values' continue to dominate 'contemporary planning processes for built heritage, institutions and practices', and, in effect, serve to replicate an 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD). In response to such concerns, alternative conceptions of heritage embracing the local and everyday expertise of people in their local environment are being devised that embrace social and other values. These emanate from 'participatory and bottom-up processes' that are 'grounded in local concerns and interests', albeit set within a broader national and international framework' of legislation, institutions and practices (Schofield, 2014, p.2).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, mediating between the competing uses of heritage depends upon identifying value conflicts and dissonance and seeking to manage them over time (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). It is critically important, therefore, that sound participatory mechanisms are developed to accommodate diverse value-sets, including non-expert values.

### Heritage diplomacy

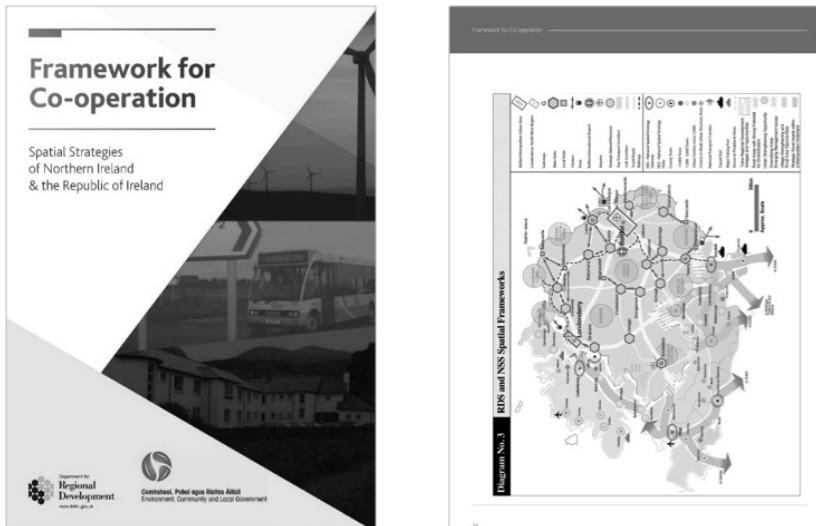
The perceived over-dominance of scholarly analysis on heritage contestation, dissonance and conflict prompted Winter's (2015, p.11) exploration of the concept of heritage diplomacy, which he defines as 'a set of processes whereby cultural and natural pasts shared between and across nations become subject to exchanges, collaborations and forms of cooperative governance'. This is predicated on the viewpoint that, although heritage is frequently a source of conflict, it can also be central to the mediation of differences between individuals, groups and even states. As Winter (2015) elaborates, governments around the world are increasingly deploying the idea of a 'shared heritage' in their diplomatic relationships with other states. Such language is evoked in the Northern Ireland Executive's *Together: Building a United Community Strategy*, which references 'shared society, 'shared space' and 'shared history, heritage and culture'. More can be done to embed heritage within local conflict resolution processes, of course, with Horning et al. (2015), for example, recommending enhanced cross-community involvement in archaeological investigations and the complexification of historical narratives (see also Phillips and Stein, 2016). The location of the Historic Environment Division within the Community Cohesion Group of the new Department for Communities in Northern Ireland may conceivably facilitate the emergence of such an approach. However, further progress is also possible on a cross-border basis where non-governmental networks are taking an active lead on heritage cooperation (Wilson, 2015). Fostering such connections can create economies of scale for a historically small and under-resourced heritage sector on the island of Ireland, while also cherishing

5 The title (and content) of Schofield's edited book, *Who Needs Experts?*, is particularly pertinent given the recent Brexit debate and the contested political discourse surrounding experts and expertise.

shared aspects of our common heritage and contributing towards reconciliation and mutual understanding.

The strategic policy environment to progress heritage diplomacy on the island of Ireland is relatively favourable. For instance, the 2013 *Framework for Cooperation for the Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* represents a 'positive reimagining of cross-border regionalism' and an example of 'high-level [spatial] public diplomacy' (Peel and Lloyd, 2015, p.2224) (see Figure 2). More importantly, for the purposes of this discussion, the *Framework for Cooperation* specifically endorses cross-border cooperation to secure the 'careful conservation and enhancement of shared natural and cultural heritage assets', and thus provides a strategic entry point to further cooperation under the umbrella of spatial planning (DRD and DoEHLG, 2013, p.28). However, the *Framework for Cooperation* serves largely as a non-statutory statement of intent and is expected to evolve over time 'as part of an iterative process' (Peel and Lloyd, 2015, p.2224). Indeed, recent reforms to the structure of government in Northern Ireland, together with the imminent emergence of the new Planning Framework for Ireland, suggest the need for a second iteration to ensure continued relevancy. In the interim period, the Framework's identification of cross-border heritage management within a landscape context as an 'important emerging planning issue', indicates the desirability of developing innovative local policy initiatives in this space (DRD and DoEHLG, 2013, p.21). The REINVENT project will contribute towards realising this strategic policy objective.

**Figure 2:** Front cover and key diagram within the Framework for Cooperation for the Spatial Strategies of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland



Source: DRD and DoEHLG, 2013

### Digital technologies in heritage management

The benefits for cultural heritage management deriving from innovative digital technologies are increasingly recognised. In particular, GIS is capable of handling vast quantities of data, at a variety of spatial scales, representing it to the public in readily accessible forms, while also facilitating the monitoring of change over time. Prominent examples of its usage include the creation of 'cultural landscape atlases' and 'digital deep maps' at places such as the Angkor World Heritage Site (Fletcher et al., 2007; Fitzjohn, 2009). Further instances relate to other facets of spatial planning and environmental management, including national park planning, the management of ecological systems and landscape character assessments (Stephenson, 2008; Brown and Weber, 2011; Ives and Kendal, 2014). GIS has been successfully deployed by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) to map census data on a cross-border basis, greatly informing public policies on health, economics and spatial planning on the island of Ireland (Gleeson, 2015). In respect of cultural heritage, Cooney (2013, p.68) argued in a previous issue of *The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland* that the 'current availability and enormous potential of digital technology', together with 'minimal investment', could readily link heritage inventories in both jurisdictions. However, no such advances have yet been made and this represents an area where collaborative action could enhance public understanding of heritage in the Irish border region.

The REINVENT project will contribute to technological innovation in cultural heritage management in two principal ways. Firstly, it is intended that an embryonic 'cultural heritage atlas' be created for the cross-border region centred on Derry/Londonderry, utilising GIS technology to map data from official heritage inventories in both jurisdictions. Initial scoping work will be undertaken to determine what data, from which inventories, but it will be predominantly focused on the built heritage. Secondly, a PPGIS-based methodology and associated mapping tool will be developed to capture a plurality of 'unofficial' heritage values ascribed by a range of communities in the region, including those associated with expressions of dissonance and contestation. This latter aspect represents a particular methodological challenge as past PPGIS studies have raised several critical issues, including the age profile of participants, sampling techniques and the ultimate failure of public authorities to integrate learning into management processes (Brown and Kytä, 2014; Brown et al., 2014). The development of appropriate strategies to address these challenges in local contexts, therefore, can greatly assist heritage policymakers and practitioners as they progress their own participatory strategies and practices.

PPGIS can also assist in counteracting one of the other critiques of traditional heritage inventories concerning their essentially 'static' nature. For instance, the mutability and changing nature of heritage values, together with the fact that judgments of significance of heritage sites are time- and context-dependent, suggests the necessity for regular review if management processes are to retain their relevancy and up-to-dateness (McClelland et al., 2013; Fredheim and Khalaf, 2016). Historic England recently launched 'Enrich the List', an initiative whereby members of the public are invited to augment the

official heritage inventory by sharing their knowledge, photographs and other insights online relating to listed buildings or places in England. Before submitting, all contributors are required to complete a 'Heritage Passport' form and all contributions are moderated for appropriateness, with the Terms and Condition of the project clearly stipulating that the publicly-generated content complements rather than forms part of the official listing record.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, this initiative represents a novel means of engaging with the public, using digital technologies to inject inventories with a dynamic quality, while facilitating the introduction of material from non-experts. The REINVENT project likewise seeks to explore the use of publicly generated data in heritage inventorying processes, including values-based ascriptions of dissonance and contestation.

### **The case of Derry/Londonderry**

The selection of the cultural landscape of Derry/Londonderry as the case study focus is central to the REINVENT project. The symbiotic relationship that the city historically enjoyed with its rural hinterland was severely curtailed by Partition and the hard border imposed during the Troubles. However, the city is once again an emergent regional capital, identified in the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002-2020 as a 'linked gateway' with Letterkenny and recognised as the 'principal city' of the North West in the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy 2035. Regional stakeholders continue to explore new collaborative forms of cross-border governance and this is an opportune moment (in spite of Brexit) to address the place of cultural heritage management within this evolving institutional context. The selection of Derry/Londonderry is further predicated on the following:

- *Rich in tangible cultural heritage* – The city's cultural inheritance includes the seventeenth century city walls and numerous statutory designations in the form of conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Furthermore, in County Donegal, surveys have been completed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and the data mapped and available to view online. So too has the historic landscape characterisation of the county, which identified 44 Landscape Character Areas (Doyle, 2016).
- *Contested symbolism and ethno-religious segregation* – The city has historically been contested, including over its name and symbolism for the two main ethno-religious groupings in Northern Ireland. Indeed, for Horning et al. (2015, p.9), the city walls are the 'most obvious example of a Plantation monument continuing to symbolically and physically exemplify division'.
- *Regeneration, heritage revalorisation and economic reorientation* – Ongoing regeneration and associated reimagining strategies are encouraging a revalorisation of the city's heritage through the reuse of historic buildings, the creation of new public spaces, symbolic artworks and community infrastructure (McClelland, 2013). For example, Troubles-era fortifications have been removed from the city walls, the former Ebrington Barracks is undergoing transformation into a mixed-use site, and

6 See <https://historicengland.org.uk/terms/website-terms-conditions/enriching-the-list-contribution-terms> [accessed 11 September 2016].

the award-winning Peace Bridge symbolically connects ‘both sides’ of the River Foyle (see figures 1-3). The UK City of Culture year in 2013 exemplified attempts to reorientate the local economy towards cultural tourism, creative industries and digital technologies, while forming part of a conscious effort to rhetorically frame ‘a new story’ for the ‘LegenDerry’ city.

- *‘Moving from a disputed past to a shared future’?*<sup>7</sup> – The positioning of Derry/Londonderry as an exemplar of conflict resolution inevitably poses questions about the extent to which such claims can be evidenced, particularly given the often static and one-dimensional view of contestation, which typically ignores socio-economic concerns. For instance, Doak (2014, p.494) notes the ‘little obvious evidence of a city transformed’ outside of the central ‘revalorised spaces of the City of Culture’, suggesting a highly uneven and differentiated economic impact from regeneration initiatives in the city to date (see also Boland et al, 2016).

**Figure 3:** The Troubles-era fortifications and surveillance apparatus (since removed) surrounding the Verbal Arts Centre on the historic city walls. Photo taken in 2005.



Source: Author

7 This characterisation is taken from Derry City Council’s unsuccessful application for the inclusion of the ‘Hill of Derry~Londonderry’ on the UK’s Tentative List of Potential Sites for World Heritage – see [http://www.worldheritagesite.org/countries/The%20Hill%20of%20Derry%20\(Northern%20Ireland\).pdf](http://www.worldheritagesite.org/countries/The%20Hill%20of%20Derry%20(Northern%20Ireland).pdf) [accessed 25 August 2016].

**Figure 4:** The view from Ebrington Barracks towards the Guildhall, before and after the construction of the Peace Bridge. Photos taken in 2008 and 2013.



*Source: Author*

**Figure 5:** The former Ebrington Barracks parade ground undergoing transformation into a multi-purpose public space. Photo taken in 2011.



*Source: Author*



## Conclusion

The two-year REINVENT project began in September 2016 and concludes in what promises to be a momentous year for cultural heritage. Not only does 2018 represent the 400th anniversary of the completion of the city walls of Derry/Londonderry, but it has also been proposed by the European Commission as European Year of Cultural Heritage with an anticipated focus on shared heritage.<sup>8</sup> However, much remains to be done and the initial stages of the REINVENT project entail establishing an online and social media presence, assembling a consultative group of spatial planning and cultural heritage management representatives, as well as further defining and refining the methodological boundaries of the research. Future expected (non-academic) project outputs, in addition to the PPGIS methodology and mapping tool, include published working papers, workshops and policy briefings in the North West. Furthermore, a key motivation not discussed above concerns the active engagement with heritage policymakers and practitioners. As Hurley et al. (2016, p.447) state: As with practice benefiting from research knowledge and evidence, research benefits from being informed by practice problems and practical knowledge, leading to broader issues of knowledge production in both spheres'. It is intended that the knowledge generated by the project will be embedded within local cultural heritage management and spatial planning networks and will also inform policies and practices. This presents another boundary-spanning challenge for the REINVENT project.

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An abstract graphic design featuring a central target-like motif of three concentric white circles on a dark background. The design is split horizontally, with a light gray upper half and a dark lower half. Four white triangles, each with a smaller white triangle inside, are positioned around the central circles. Thin white lines radiate from the center towards the triangles. The text "Reviews >" is located in the dark lower half, to the right of the central circles.

Reviews >

## The EU-Russia Borderland: New contexts for regional cooperation



**Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen,  
James W. Scott (Editors)**

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*The EU-Russia Borderland* is published in the BASEES/Routledge series on Russian and East European studies and it has taken as its target area Northwest Russia and the Finnish-Russian borderland, which until the 2004 EU enlargement was the only common border between the EU and Russia. The book contains 13 chapters written by both senior and junior scholars, and it has been edited by Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen and James W. Scott, who all hold a professorship in the University of Eastern Finland and are established scholars in the field of border studies.

The aim of book is to examine the reconstitution of Northwest Russia (and the Finnish-Russian borderland) and the role of cross-border interaction in this process. The book begins with an introductory chapter, in which the editors frame the research topic and give an overview of the individual chapters. They explain that the research is motivated by the EU-Russia relations that have become increasingly complicated since the turn of the millennium and represent the ultimate challenge for regional actors and their cross-border endeavors. If the 1990s were characterised by the spirit of cooperation and border permeability, during the following decade issues of sovereignty, national interests and identity again gained the highest priority. Consequently, the book raises the question whether the weakened EU-Russia relations and the public debate over the East/West civilizational divide resonates on local-level experience. The authors argue that despite the constraints set by geopolitics, local actors have been able to “take initiative and create space for increasing cross-border integration.”

The volume is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on political integration of regions in Northwest Russia. In 2000, the Russian federal authorities introduced a new level of governance, federal districts. Each of these originally seven districts were combined of smaller federal subjects and appointed a presidential representative to oversee the compliance of the subjects with the federal law. The aim of this reform was to reinforce ‘vertical power structures’, but it also laid the foundation for the development of

interregional integration between the federal subjects. Based on an empirical study in the Northwestern Federal District, the authors conclude that despite the new contacts and projects, there is no evidence of the emergence of new regional communities in the district. The willingness to commit to interregional cooperation and identify with the federal district varied between the federal subjects. Subjects active in cross-border cooperation and with many concurrent discourses of who 'we' are, were more ready for political integration than subjects with less cross-border ties and a single dominant discourse – a regional myth that was shared by the political elite and the majority of the inhabitants.

The second part of the book discusses how cross-border interaction has affected different fields of action in Northwest Russia and eastern Finland. These fields include economic activities, voluntary ethnic associations, labour markets, spatial planning, oil and gas exports from Russia and cross-border collaboration between civil society organisations.

In his article about borderland economies, Heikki Eskelinen illustrates how prevailing geopolitical and institutional conditions are reflected in cross-border interaction and the development of borderlands. In the Finnish-Russian border area, the actors have faced major geopolitical changes in the last twenty years, beginning with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (and the consequent relaxation of the border regime) and Finland's accession to the EU in 1995. During the Soviet

times, the border regions could not trade freely, because the Finnish-Russian trade was based on bilateral agreements and managed on the national level. Despite the high expectations in the early 1990s, Russia's share in eastern Finland's foreign trade has remained lower than the national average (10-12 percent of total exports). This is explained by the western oriented exports of large companies and their reluctance to initiate Russian-oriented strategies, while smaller companies often lack the resources to engage in cross-border trade. Eskelinen, however, reminds us that this macro-perspective conceals important emerging aspects of local cross-border dynamics. The amount of border crossings has increased dramatically (from 1.3 million in 1991 to 8.4 million in 2010) benefiting economies of border regions, and economic ties between Finnish and Russian border regions are stronger and more diversified than they were during the Soviet times.

The other articles of the second part support the argument that cross-border interaction shapes, in many ways, developments in border areas. In terms of labor markets, the interaction has played a marginal role for Russia, but a crucial role for Finland and its eastern border regions. It was estimated in 2006 that 66,000 Finnish people were employed by enterprises whose production depended on Russian demand or by Russian-owned companies, or in services directed at Russian tourists or Russian markets. In certain sectors of the economy, a seasonal workforce from Russia and Russian migrants has also become increasingly important. In spatial planning, cross-border collaboration

between Russian and Finnish regional authorities has remained low compared to cooperation between EU member states, but important first steps have been taken in the form of knowledge exchange and joint reports. Matti Fritsch notes that the spatial interdependencies necessitate cooperation, even if it has been hampered by the reservations of Russian decision makers to adopt European practices, the lack of resources by the regional actors to engage in cross-border activities and the differences in size and national strategic importance of the regions.

Ilkka Liikanen discusses the role played by connections and cooperation with the West (the EU and especially Finland) in the emergence of voluntary ethnic associations in Russian Karelia in the late and post-Soviet periods. His (somewhat lengthy) analysis has as its starting point an interesting dilemma: in the West, Russia's post-Soviet transformation has often been interpreted as having two contradictory periods – the period of Yeltsin that emphasized integration and close partnership with the West (and ultimately the adaptation of Western models and values) and the period of Putin that stressed geopolitical divisions and the primacy of state sovereignty. Is it possible to trace this transition and attitudes towards the West in the press reports that deal with ethnic movements in Russian Karelia? The author illustrates how the political rhetoric at the grassroots level has followed an entirely different logic, and only during Putin's presidency the notion of Europeanness has been gradually transformed into a symbol of joint working modes and functioning.

The third part of the book is dedicated to socio-cultural transformations in Northwest Russia. Contributions in this part address such issues as post-Soviet transformation of the mono-industrial border towns of Svetogorsk and Kostomuksha, local identity formation in the border town of Sortavala before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union and young people's views of the educational system and labour markets.

The two chapters on the border cities complement each other well. The first one has a more practical approach on how the cities of Svetogorsk and Kostamuksha have transformed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and how their locally dominant enterprises have taken contradictory routes concerning the local communities. In Svetogorsk, the American corporation International Paper has tried to focus on core business activities and stay away from local problems and politics. This, according to the authors, has probably been an unsustainable strategy. In Kostamuksha, the managers of the main local enterprise Severstal have played an active role in developing the town and pursuing its interests on the federal level that has turned in the city's advantage. The chapter on Sortavala, even if in a somewhat unfocused way, describes the transformation of the city from a Soviet garrison town to a major regional centre for trade and tourism. The border and cross-border interaction have played an important part in this process.

The book concludes with a chapter scrutinizing the issue of cross-border region building between the Finnish and Russian Karelia. With the concept



of 'borderland' the authors refer not only to a space of transition between two political entities (nation states), but to a space that is "largely outside the traditional realms of politics": Karelia is for them a regional idea that supports a common Finnish-Russian space.

Does such a Karelia exist? The authors claim it does and illustrate how the processes of Finnish-Russian borderlands formation are taking place in several ways. A decisive role in this process belongs to "people who spend their weekends or own property on the other side, develop economic networks and business ventures across the border, or whose family ties and social relationships are 'bi-national'." The actions of these people are naturally framed by current social, economic and geopolitical realities.

Major geopolitical events have taken place since the publication of the book in 2013. It came out a year before the crisis in Ukraine broke out and three years before anti-EU feelings escalated in the Brexit vote in the UK. These events have profoundly shaped the political landscape in which actors in the EU-Russia borderland operate. Nevertheless, the main arguments of the book have remained relevant. The limitation of the study is rather the fact that it focuses on a particular part of the Finnish-Russian border area, that of (Russian and to a smaller extent Finnish) Karelia. The border between Finland and Russia is 1300 km long, and this part of the border differs radically from the more densely populated southern part, which is dominated by the city of Saint Petersburg with roughly as many inhabitants as the whole of Finland. This

issue is raised in some of the chapters, but nevertheless the view of the border area remains limited. The book also claims to study the regional actors, but in most chapters their voices are unfortunately lost behind the authors' own narratives.

What does the book have to offer for actors in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border area? First, for those interested, it offers a well-informed overview into the post-Soviet developments in Northwest Russia (and the Finnish-Russian border area) and is not overwhelmed with theoretical debates. Second, it discusses several problems that border regions, however geographically distant from one another, often share. Collaborating across borders in tackling these questions is different on EU external borders than on internal borders. The border between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom is not likely to mirror that of the Finnish-Russian border even after Brexit, but there might still be some lessons learnt from the book.

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## The EU-Russia Borderland: New contexts for regional cooperation

Nowadays when East-West tensions are quite palpable, this edited volume offers a much needed unconventional perspective on the EU-Russia relations – “not from the lofty heights of Kremlinology or as yet another illustration of the clash of civilizations” (p. 61), but through the lenses of everyday practices and grassroots initiatives on the EU-Russia borderland. While the reality brings evidence of nationalism, securitisation, assertive foreign policies and populism being on the rise, distancing from global and national centres and looking at the world processes from the periphery and particularly from the borderlands has become an even more critical approach. This alternative analytical optics enables a more nuanced and profound understanding of variable and heterogeneous nature of states, regions and borders between them.

As Jussi Laine, one of contributing authors to this book, aptly pointed out in his recent publication, borders are “complex and dynamic multiscale entities that have different symbolic and material forms maintained by a multiplicity of bordering processes and practices” (2016, p. 466). This edited volume is a unique depository of these “bordering processes and practices” revealed on the particular borderland – a transitional space between Russia and Finland that is “considered by both

sides to be a laboratory for co-operation between Russia and the EU” (p. 201). This attitude to the borderlands as empowered places of experiment is repeated in the central research question of the book which is to what extent and in which way local and regional social, economic and political actors involved in cross-border networks may “reconfigure the relationship between the EU and Russia” (p. 7).

Due to the expertise of authors involved in the book creation and the broad spectrum of issues addressed, this volume may be defined as an encyclopedia of the Russian-Finnish borderland (or to be precise of its central and southern parts). A team of contributing authors includes Russian and Finnish academics most of whom have first-hand experience of living and working in the Russian-Finnish borderland. Nine out of 16 authors are based in University of Eastern Finland, a well-known research center for Border Studies and Russian Studies. Given the authors’ diverse backgrounds, key themes touched upon in the volume encompass identity politics, region-building and ‘re-scaling’ of levels of integration and interaction. The units of analysis range from border towns (Sortavala, Svetogorsk, Kostomuksha) to (cross-)border regions (mostly Karelia), from particular actors of cooperation (civil society organisations, ethnic organisations, youth) to entire fields of interactions (such as economic ties, labour market and spatial planning).

The subtitle of the volume is somewhat intriguing as it promises to unveil “new contexts for regional co-operation”.

To name these contexts, the book discusses content and results of Russia's political, economic, societal and cultural transformations keeping in mind multiplicity, simultaneity and overlay of these processes. Whereas from chapter to chapter authors repeat that "Russia's overall transition has not met foreign (Western) expectations" (p. 183), privatisation, individualisation within Russian society and launch of Russia's post-socialist modernisation project are some of the features that significantly shape the way cross-border interaction is developing.

The book is divided into three rather unequal parts. The first section comprises three chapters that focus on internal political integration (to the federal centre) – a trend happening in Russia after it had transited from total centralisation to relative decentralisation in the 1990s. Both chapters written by Elena Belokurova and Maria Nozhenko are designed as comparative studies of Russian regions located in the Northwest Federal District (NWFD) – a new level of vertical power structure. Chapter Two postulates that no political community has evolved in NWFD due to the lack of commitment to interregional integration and absence of large and stable communication networks (p. 18). Chapter Three evaluates regional political communities on the basis of their modularity and region-centeredness and concludes that political community formation is dependent on political regime, ongoing political process, presence of regional myth and history of external ties.

The second part consists of six chapters and suggests that *new processes and*

*new actors of cross-border interaction* between Russia and Finland have influenced the overall change in the borderland. This section of the book addresses Russia's transformation from planned economy to the market, from relatively closed border with the West to a more porous one, from strict ideological control towards pluralism. The third part comprises four chapters and is primarily concerned with the symbolic and ideological repositioning happening in Russian border regions and cities, as well as in some cross-border areas (for instance in the trans-border region of Karelia).

The final two parts of the book contain different assessments of integration attempts on the Russian-Finnish border which exemplify that cooperation in different fields proceed with different speeds. In Chapter Four drawing on analysis of market-based interactions, Heikki Eskelinen states that "geography matters when political conditions allow it" (p. 49), pointing at various asymmetries that were born due to the lack of "compatibility of territorialization processes" (p. 59). Equally critical evaluation of integration in the field of labour market and spatial planning is present in Chapters Six and Seven. Investigating the realm of people-to-people cooperation, Alexander Izotov in Chapter 11 reached a more positive conclusion, that is that residents on both sides of the border are already involved in "processes of self-initiated and self-motivated integration" (p. 171). James Scott and Vladimir Kolossov in Chapter 13 also posit that cross-border lifestyles have already emerged in the Russian-Finnish trans-border region (p. 209).

The fact that this edited volume was published in 2013 may be interpreted both as an argument for and against reading it today. While many chapters were initially written to provide a historical overview (for instance Chapters Two and Five), others became a history since the social, economic and geopolitical situation has dramatically changed within the last three years. Since 2014 we are witnessing the Ukrainian crisis, sanctions and counter-sanctions, a deep downturn in oil industry and Russia's currency devaluation. However, I would recommend treating the book as a rare cut into cross-border grassroots interactions, tendencies and discourses captured just before the geopolitical change happened, something that is no longer possible. Thus, the book presents a useful foothold for comparison and understanding qualitative and quantitative fluctuations of flows, hopes and opinions that were present in the EU-Russia borderland. On the other hand, some figures (such as numbers of border crossings and flows of commodities and investments) are outdated and investigation of current statistics will break previously identified trends. Furthermore, certain events, both long-awaited (as Russia's accession to WTO in August 2012) and sudden (as abolishment of the Ministry of Regional Development of Russia, the federal authority in charge of coordinating cross-border cooperation, in September 2014), have transformed the institutional actuality of the borderland.

Despite interesting points raised by this book, there are aspects that have been underrepresented or overlooked. One

of them is an unbalanced structure of analysis – while the state of art on the Russian side of the border has been analysed thoroughly, the situation on the Finnish side or in the EU has not been particularly discussed in most of the chapters (except for Chapters 4, 6, 7 and 13). This can be explained by the assumption that there are separate books on each of the matters discussed on Finland and the EU respectively or by the possible positioning of the book as a contribution predominantly to the field of Russian Studies. Nevertheless, such a skewed narrative raises additional challenges for the potential reader and consequently may limit the audience of the book.

Another shortcoming of the volume is the lack of comparison – both with other external borders of the EU and with other EU-Russia borders. Moreover, interactions across the Northern part of the Russian-Finnish border, as well as cooperation within larger European frameworks – Barents and Baltic macro-regions – have not been provided with an adequate representation. Finally, the book organisation does not seem to ease the encounter with the book message. The reader may gain a more comprehensive and systematic overview of the subject if the first and the third parts of the book devoted to Russian border regions (except for the Chapter 13) are read one after the other and followed by the second part and Chapter 13 stressing cross-border interdependencies between two sides of the border.

Despite the fact that the new geopolitical and macroeconomic

actuality, as well as the new domestic agendas had substantially influenced cross-border ties and the possibility of bottom-up reconfiguration of EU-Russia relations, this book remains a highly recommended read as it is an advanced contribution to studying borderlands. It fills the deficiency in analysing Russian transformation in English academic press and will be of great interest for practitioners of cross-border cooperation, social scientists and students.

### **Bibliography**

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## **The European Union and Peacebuilding: The cross-border dimension**



**Cathal McCall**  
**Palgrave Studies in European Union**  
**Politics (2014)**  
**Palgrave Macmillan UK**  
**£66.00, 175 pp.**  
**ISBN 978-1-137-35770-0**

From the Mexican-American border to the Mediterranean ports of Europe, in the modern era, borders have become a pivotal feature of global security discourse and practice. This book critically examines the multifaceted nature of borders within conflict and post-conflict environments and analyses the contribution of the European Union's cross-border initiatives to advancing peacebuilding, both within and beyond Europe's borders. In this endeavour, this book offers an invaluable contribution to the field of border studies, in so far as it explores the role of borders as vessels of

identity and as a locus for distinguishing the 'Self' from the 'Other'. In a twenty-first century context defined by a climate of threat posed by novel forces of 'dark globalisation', principally the replacement of armies at the gates with international terrorists and criminals, this book offers a timely reminder to the relevance today of cross-border initiatives to conflict amelioration.

Since its inception, as a global actor, the EU has promoted integration as a means to support peace and conflict amelioration. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention lay at the core of the EU's *raison d'être*. At its heart the EU aims to "promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples" (TEU Art 3 - 1) and to "preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security" (TEU Art 21 - 2). Perhaps at no other point has the EU's efforts in this area been better recognised than with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. This served as a reminder of the vital role performed by the EU in building sustainable peace in the post Second World War era.

Seen through the lens of the threat from global terrorism and crime, the claim that territorial state borders act as security barriers is clearly mistaken. Nevertheless, for many the allure of perceiving territorial state borders as security barriers persists. Not only does conflict not respect political or territorial boundaries but also, as revealed by the author, in countless cases it is the much contested nature of these boundaries which often generates conflict. Moreover, when a policy gap exists across borderlands, where individual

states' diplomatic efforts fall short with fatal consequences, the existence of an intergovernmental institution can offer space for nations to look beyond the state for solutions, while nurturing meaningful dialogue and cooperative, cross-border links, which enhances capacity for conflict prevention and resolution. The key purpose of this book is to demonstrate the enduring significance of borders in modern conflicts, while critically appraising EU cross-border peacebuilding initiatives.

At the outset, McCall offers a useful insight into the multifarious sources of border conflict within the EU and across its 'external frontier'. Relations between Estonia and Russia and between Hungary and Ukraine are cited as being complicated by ethno-linguistic sources. Such ethno-linguistic complications are said to resonate at the geopolitical heart of the EU, through incompatibilities between Flemish and Walloon communities in Belgium. McCall (p.14) illuminates how competing, diverging, revised and unrevised national commemorations, while historic, also serve as 'live' sources of conflict in Ireland and Cyprus and between Turkey and Armenia. Indeed, national identities are fundamentally territorial, as borders symbolically mark the limit of national groups, beyond which exists perceived ideas of 'Otherness' and threat. For many national communities across Europe, including Hungarian, Albanian, Moldovan, Russian, Romanian, Polish, Basque, Irish, Catalan, Flemish, Serbian and Croatian, borders pose an existential threat as they fail to recognise the territorial integrity of their collective identities, which illustrates McCall's

point to their importance for long-term amelioration in Europe.

For McCall (p.16) a shared culture is the glue that binds an ethnic group and provides the 'bonds of solidarity' which differentiates it from others. Territorial conflict emerges, it is explained, when:

*"[C]ompeting national groups and their interests cannot be made compatible, when they have the ability to mobilise and are invigorated by a justifying ideology with legitimating myths and interpretive symbols"* (McCall 2014: 17).

For national groups involved in disputes regarding the creation of state borders, McCall (p.18) argues, flags are symbols *par excellence* given that they provide simple yet ambiguous understandings of nations which coalesce consensus around them. The use of symbols in the Northern Ireland context represents such a case where groups have competed for access to cultural recognition within the public sphere, particularly with the flying of national flags on public buildings.

Having explored the sources of border conflicts, McCall (p.36) goes on to offer a nuanced insight into the potential opportunities for cross-border initiatives to lead to conflict amelioration. In this book McCall (p.35) ultimately contends that:

*"Cross-border cooperation is integral to conflict amelioration because it promises to open the territorial cage of the state to enable the development of intercultural dialogue and inter-communal relations across border"*.

Cross-border cooperation and dialogue essentially offers the opportunity for conflicting groups to address national tensions, grievances and fears which can fuel conflict. As McCall (p.35) points out, both European integration and association processes have entailed the progress of interstate cooperation and protection for minorities left on the wrong side of the border. EU enlargement in 2004 revealed how through the accession process the allure of 're-joining Europe' for most Central and Eastern European states facilitated the extension of minority rights and cross-border mobility, which was largely driven by the need to meet the conditions of the EU's *acquis communautaire*.

To date cross-border cooperation has existed primarily within an economic orientation. An underlying assumption, however, is that cross-border dialogue indirectly addresses conflict wounds manifest in lingering suspicion and hatred of the "Significant Other" (McCall 2014: 40). In particular, the joint accession by the UK and Ireland to the EEC in 1973 was followed by a transformation of British-Irish intergovernmental relations. Mutual EEC membership provided a neutral "warm space" where British and Irish governments could build a new relationship (McCall 2014: 43). Moreover, McCall (p.82) demonstrates how the EU played a vital role in reconfiguring the Irish border economically, politically and culturally. A physical reconfiguration of the Irish border from a barrier to a bridge was facilitated by the removal of customs posts in 1992, in the

objective to build a European Single Market, and the demilitarisation of the Irish “borderscape” (McCall 2014: 90). Perhaps more importantly, cross-border initiatives provided space for contact between the Irish nationalist and British unionist communities to the ends of exploring cultural commonality and diversity, which has cemented the Peace Process.

This book’s utility is enhanced in so far as it represents a critical account of cross-border cooperation and is open to the assorted risks and challenges posed by such projects. In this sense, the reader is presented with a pragmatic rather than idealistic account, which ought to be considered when pursuing any such cross-border initiative. Firstly, the author challenges the rationale of cross-border cooperation, as grounded contact theory, which insists that greater cross-community or interstate dialogue necessarily leads to conflict amelioration. An alternative view, as held by Newman<sup>1</sup> and others, suggests that cross-border cooperation may generate a “narcissism of minor differences” through the quest to establish commonality across borders, thereby exacerbating conflict tensions rather than ameliorating them. For McCall (p.79) this means that cross-border cooperation as conflict amelioration needs to steer a careful course through a myriad of cultural sensitivities, with each project conducted in terms of respect for minor cultural differences.

Having challenged the theory behind cross-border cooperation, McCall

evaluates its success in practice. Upon evaluating a range of cross-border initiatives, McCall (p.48) concludes that the evidence of its efficacy is mixed. Therefore:

*“[I]t should not be assumed that cross-border interaction automatically results in shared values and reconciled identities”* (McCall 2014: 48).

Indeed, while the ‘Greece-FYROM IPA Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013’ provided €21.3 million, the number of genuinely cross-border social cultural projects is open to debate. The success of cross-border initiatives at peacebuilding, for McCall (p. 48), must combine the EU economically-oriented appeals to the head with appeals to the heart which promote intercultural dialogue and manufacture symbols of intercultural understanding, which must be real and voluntary.

Although written in 2014, this book describes the rise of Euroscepticism as a force with the potential to negate advances made in European intergovernmental peacebuilding. Post-referendum, the continuation of EU driven cross-border initiatives on the island of Ireland is likely to be called into question. While both UK and Irish governments affirm their commitment to maintaining existing arrangements, the prospect of border controls could destabilise the progress made. This can be seen when Northern Ireland’s deputy First Minister, Sinn Féin’s Martin McGuinness, declared the need for a border poll immediately following

1 Newman, David. Borders and Bordering: Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue *European Journal of Social Theory*, May 2006 9: 171-186



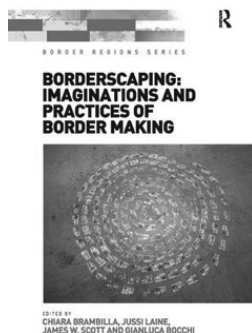
Northern Ireland's decisive vote to remain in the EU.

For any student or practitioner in border conflict or peacebuilding studies, this book offers an essential read. In providing a critical account of cross-border initiatives towards peacebuilding, McCall reveals the source and relevance of border conflicts in the contemporary era. It is clear that cross-border cooperation can progress conflict amelioration as it may provide a means of "opening the territorial cage of the state" and "promoting cross border intercultural dialogue for communities amenable to such dialogue" (p. 127). However, by emphasising the underwhelming results experienced after over a quarter of a century of EU sponsored cross-border cooperation, McCall (p. 127) reveals that the communicative symbolism of cross-border cooperation has too rarely translated into intercultural interaction. The challenge, therefore, is to build deep and sustained support for intercultural cross-border cooperation initiatives that have peacebuilding as a central theme.

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## **Borderscaping: Imaginations and practices of border making**



**Edited by Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine, James W. Scott and Gianluca Bocchi**

**Routledge (2015)**

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Security and borders are all the rage. The early twenty-first century political and media fix on 'global terrorism' and 'mass migration' has screamed for a security response. That response has focused attention on borders. It involves strident calls for the construction of hard security borders to stop the mobility of 'terrorists', contested migrants and refugees.

The relationship between borders and security has also ignited an interest in

borders among International Relations scholars who have quite recently launched *Critical Border Studies* as an adjunct to *Critical Security Studies*. Good interdisciplinary research on borders must, first of all, respect and learn from research pioneers before continuing with the dig and adding to the body of knowledge. Border Studies has a distinguished interdisciplinary lineage. JRV Prescott's seminal *Boundaries and Frontiers* first appeared in 1978. Border Studies involves not only geographers, but also anthropologists, architects, sociologists, political scientists, economists, lawyers, psychologists, electronic engineers and researchers from the Arts and Humanities. They are seldom anything other than 'critical'. *Borderscapes: Imaginations and practices of border making* demonstrates that sustained criticality. This book builds upon a rich seam of interdisciplinary research, which drives conceptual change and advances our understanding of bordering, debordering and rebordering processes and practices in a rapidly changing world.

Emerging from the EU FP7 *EUBORDERSCAPES* project<sup>1</sup> (and its complementary FP7 *EUBORDERREGIONS* project) – both led with considerable aplomb by Professor James Wesley Scott from the University of Eastern Finland – *Borderscapes* mobilises the concept of borderscapes to address the complex, multidimensional and evolving understandings of borders,

be they substantive, symbolic or imagined<sup>2</sup>. The borderscape concept is used to explore the multiplicity of bordering, debordering and rebordering processes and practices in geographical, political, social and cultural contexts. As such, the book is organised in five parts dealing with conceptual change, everyday bordering processes, Euro/Mediterranean borderscapes, city borders and border cities and cultural production and borderscapes. Given its origin it will come as no surprise that the book is Eurocentric in content. However, to the editors' credit, a healthy number of chapters (there are 22 in total) are concerned with borderscapes that straddle the EU's 'external frontier', as well as those beyond it.

Elena dell'Agnese (in chapter 4) informs us that the term 'borderscape' first emerged at the turn into the twenty-first century and has since been ascribed with multiple interpretations. Two of them are particularly instructive. Borderscapes may be understood to be territorial scapes straddling state borders and characterised by contested discourses and meanings, as well as struggles over inclusion and exclusion. The global security crisis, the Mediterranean migrant/refugee crisis and 'Brexit' each nourish this understanding of borderscapes. The response is rebordering through the reinforcement of borders as security barriers to keep out potentially threatening and unwanted 'outsiders'. In effect, this promises a

1 *EUBORDERSCAPES* (290775) was funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (FP7-SSH-2011-1), Area 4.2.1 The evolving concept of borders.

2 It follows recent important contributions to Border Studies, notably, Doris Wastl-Walter (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* (2011, Ashgate); Hastings Donnan and Thomas M Wilson (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Border Studies* (2012, Wiley-Blackwell); and Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary and Frédéric Giraut (eds.), *Borderities and the Politics of Contemporary Mobile Borders* (2015, Palgrave Macmillan).

rededication of the relationship between territory, borders and identity.

Yet, borderscapes can also be interpreted as important sites for inter-cultural contact, communication, mobility and cooperation that service the needs of our complex and rapidly changing world. In this interpretation, borderscapes can present challenges to static cultural, political and social meanings, as well as opportunities to develop those meanings in order to facilitate an appreciation of their cultural complexity, engender respect for cultural differences and embed conviviality. 'Searching and finding' as Anna Krasteva eloquently describes it in this volume (p. 13). Henk van Houtum and Mark Eker (chapter 3) suggest that such borderscape complexity requires representation in maps set free from the strictures of modern state sovereignty. However, they strike a sombre note when they say that while the EU has sought to valorise such transnational spaces through an emphasis on literal bridge-building, such spaces have 'not struck deep roots' (p. 47). Thus, cartographic convention, which follows the line of statecraft, remains difficult to supplant.

In the *EUBORDERSCAPES* research project the debate on everyday bordering was led with customary vigour by the inestimable Nira Yuval-Davis. So it comes as something of a disappointment that Professor Yuval-Davis has not contributed to this volume<sup>3</sup>. However, those who have highlight the persuasive role of

'borders of the imagination'. In everyday bordering between Finland and Russia, Lebanon and Israel and Bulgaria and Croatia these imagined borders are expressed in literature, the media and museums through stereotypes, imagined distinctions and images. Nevertheless, a note of optimism is struck by Marta Zorko (chapter 8) who observes the endurance of old cohesive local and regional identities and conviviality among neighbours in the 'post-conflict' Croatian-Slovenian borderscape.

Part III provides a timely reflection on Euro/Mediterranean borderscapes with migration, humanitarianism, asylum and border control the dominant themes. Martin Lemberg-Pedersen tackles the geopolitical complexity involved in the EU's efforts to construct its border control infrastructure with neighbours, involving local knowledge, high politics and technology. He concludes that key drivers in this construction are actors in the European military industry who have a vested interest in border building. Meanwhile, Paolo Cuttitta ably demonstrates the interaction between competing humanitarian, securitisation and cultural narratives in Euro/Mediterranean borderscapes through a focus on the Italian/North Africa frontier. Evidence that the EU's 'external frontier' securitisation agenda has not closed down Euro/Mediterranean borderscape imaginations and cultural practices is provided by Chiara Brambilla through her study of the LampedusaInFestival. It comes as something of a relief.

3 Nira Yuval-Davis' Working Paper on everyday bordering for the *EUBORDERSCAPES* project, entitled 'A Situated Intersectional Everyday Approach to the Study of Bordering' (2013), can be accessed at [http://www.euborderscapes.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Working\\_Papers/EUBORDERSCAPES\\_Working\\_Paper\\_2\\_Yuval-Davis.pdf](http://www.euborderscapes.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Working_Papers/EUBORDERSCAPES_Working_Paper_2_Yuval-Davis.pdf) (accessed 13/09/2016).

The phenomena of city borders and border cities will be a familiar to readers who reside in Belfast, Derry, Dundalk and Newry. Sadly, none of these throbbing metropolises is the subject of investigation in Part IV<sup>4</sup>. Instead, London and Naples are the subjects of chapters by Georgie Wemyss, Maria Cristina Paganoni and Caterina Miele. Georgie Wemyss' account of the 'post-imperial metropolitan city of London' reveals hidden histories and memories of empire. Travellers on the Docklands Light Railway, passing through stations named 'Cyprus', 'East India', and 'West India Quay', are pointed in this direction. Wemyss argues convincingly that these histories and communal memories have resulted in discriminatory processes and practices which have deleterious consequences for the transcontinental connections of British Bangladeshis. Paganoni utilises the novel *In the Kitchen* by Monica Ali to explore migrant and refugee borderscapes in London. In doing so she questions the accepted civic (rather than ethnic or cultural) conceptualisation of British identity. In Naples, Miele finds similar patterns of racialisation and bordered confinement visited upon the Roma. Resistance to that confinement, through crossing, negotiating and contesting borders, is touched upon here and identified as a subject for further fruitful exploration.

The final section deals with the relationship between cultural production and borderscapes. Those familiar with the transformation of the Irish

borderscape over the past quarter of a century will recognise the importance of cultural production, through the thousands of cross-border, cross-community creative arts, music, sports and storytelling projects funded largely by the EU Peace programmes. Some of these important cultural resources are explored in this section. Jopi Nyman considers border crossing through Jamal Mahjoub's short story *Last Thoughts on the Medusa* the subject of which is the journey of African migrants to Europe. Nyman argues that this short story offers a glimpse of the profound implications of such border crossing for identity transformation. Claudia Gualtieri explores the potential of 'Euro/African borderscapes on stage' – 'borderstages' – for transcending physical borders and creating cultural and emotional development. Cristina Giudice examines the role of the artist in providing insights on the borderscape experiences of people. This examination resonates with John Paul Lederach's elucidation on the role of the artist in generating innovative thinking for peacebuilding. He would doubtless agree with Giudice's proposition that the works of contemporary artists "speak directly to us ... because art is inside the reality. The involvement of performances and installations can shake our certitudes, because, if only for a few seconds, we become the Other ..." (p. 254).

In sum, this is a path-breaking and stimulating book on the imaginations and practices of border making and

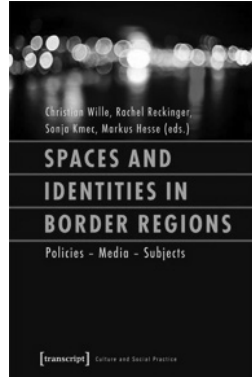
4 Borders in the Irish context are the subjects of a number of books including, Brendan Murtagh and Pete Shirlow, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (2006, Pluto Press); John Coakley and Liam O'Dowd, *Crossing the Border: New Relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland* (2007, Irish Academic Press); and Henry Patterson, *Ireland's Violent Frontier: The Border and Anglo-Irish Relations During the Troubles* (2013, Palgrave Macmillan).

border transcending. It would have benefitted from having a conclusion though, admittedly, such a task would be near impossible given the sheer breadth and depth of the work that it showcases. As it stands, Borderscapes is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to Border Studies at a time of great policy relevance for this important, interdisciplinary field of study.

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## **Spaces and Identities in Border Regions: politics – media – subjects**



**Christian Wille, Rachel Reckinger,  
Sonja Kmec, Markus Hesse (eds.)**  
**Bielefeld: transcript, 2016**  
**€29.99 (pbk) pp 400**  
**ISBN: 9783837626506**

Border Studies is at risk of becoming a field of scholarship which is densely occupied but rarely endowed with bounteous insights or imagination. We appear to have responded to complex emerging challenges with a tendency towards disciplinary introspection and staid tradition. In this highly restrained and codified environment, intellectual endeavour and original contribution is marked, for the most part, by the creation of new verbs (several examples of which are provided in the extract below). We have substituted word play for scholarly challenge. Whilst borders tighten across Europe and we witness

the most significant rise of xenophobia for three generations, much of Border Studies is still pre-occupied with ever more obscurantist ways of describing the same processes – processes which are at risk of being relics of a happier era of pan-European cooperation.

*Spaces and Identities in Border Regions* offers the tantalising prospect of being something different. It examines three major loci of change: politics, media, and subjects (or ‘people’ to you and I) in Europe at a time when border management and border crossing are under major scrutiny and in great flux. The book is co-authored by some of the leading and upcoming academics in European Border Studies and much of what it presents is original research funded by the University of Luxembourg.

The potential for imagination and insights is, however, somewhat crushed by many of the familiar problems of Border Studies – obscurantist concepts and impenetrable prose are the main features of commonality across this wide range of chapters. Almost every time an author touches on a theme of likely relevance, the writing is frustratingly dense. For example, a concluding paragraph in the chapter on ‘space and identity constructions in everyday cultural practices’ reads as follows:

*...investigations in ‘cross-border contexts’ exclude the supposition of fixed spatial entities, preset identities and subjects that derive their agency from social structures. Instead, the authors [in the preceding chapters] saw themselves (time and again) obliged to take a genuinely constructivist-relational*

*perspective on their objects of research which in this chapter manifested itself primarily as a decentration [sic] of the subject. Here the empirical subject is effectively replaced by the concept of the subject as socially constituted and as constituting the social, in brief: the subject as an empirical [sic] project. This research perspective – translated to the analytical categories of subjectivation [sic] and subjectification [sic]– does not only tie in with the approaches of current cultural studies but is a precondition for adequately accessing subjects in the context of the border. (p.353)*

The convoluted prose is such that, once having made the considerable effort necessary to unravel the meaning, the reader is more than likely to disagree with it. This is a book written as though its authors doubt very much that it will actually be read.

The book begins with a heavily laboured introduction, followed by a literature review (of the saintly cannon of dead white male professors: from de Certeau, to Lefebvre, to Soja...), all the while resting on Foucauldian neuroses (i.e. quirky references to power) as if they were illuminating. These are followed by a pseudo-methodological chapter in which the non-literal becomes pressed into meaningless diagrams, for no apparent reason. After this trying start, the reader is left to contend with a vast array of empirical topics.

The range of topics the book includes is very large and contains a most diverse and unexpected selection of case studies (from teenagers on Facebook,

to art installations, to petrol stations and multilingual adverts). Among these, there is plenty to learn about, and from unexpected sources too. For example, you may take your pick from such chapters as a fascinating account of the architecture of a medieval European castle to an entertaining essay on the links between cross-border prostitution and national morality; “why do we not more often make use of the legal lever of deportation”, a député of the Luxembourg parliament enquired in 1904, “then many vendible harlots would have to leave the public houses and cross the border, taking much that is sordid with them” (p83). This theme of associating morality with the nation and immorality with ‘foreigners’ is one that speaks much to the experience today of the perception and treatment of immigrants.

That said, trying to find a gem or two applicable beyond the specific case of Luxembourg is as difficult and pointless as trying to identify how the stylised, highfalutin theoretical analysis relates in any real way to the empirical evidence uncovered. As stand-alone pieces these essays would work fairly well, notwithstanding the slavish adherence to the somewhat convoluted theoretical framework imposed; it is unfortunate for the authors of these chapters that their contributions were combined into this book.

Interested parties (specifically those interested in Luxembourg, which is without doubt a fascinating country for revealing the dynamics and tensions of cross-border practices) would be best advised to look at the distinct work of

the contributing authors rather than buying this book. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine whom this book might appeal to – sales will surely depend on the number of Foucauldian border scholars in Luxembourg and its immediate neighbours, or else those poor souls who buy a book on its title. Unfortunately, it will find few non-academics for whom a read of this book will prove either illuminating or useful.

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## Piecing together Europe's Citizenship: Searching for Cinderella



**Tony Venables**

**Nomos**

**€26, 197pp**

**ISBN 978-3-8487-3113-8 (Print) / 978-3-8452-7483-6 (ePDF)**

Written by civil society activist and European affairs expert Tony Venables, this book explores the question "What is European citizenship?" by means of guidelines on European citizens' rights, involvement and trust.

The author suggests that *European citizenship is too scattered an affair, meaning so many different things to different people that it can end up an abstraction.*

Aimed at civil society activists, researchers and policy makers the book explores the origins of European

citizenship, the rights it encompasses and the need to move beyond concept to full citizen engagement.

The book is divided into two parts; the first part sets the scene by briefly introducing the ancient emergence of transnational citizenship and how that has influenced modern day European citizenship. The author outlines the development of citizenship within the European Treaties and how the concept progressed as a result of the Court of Justice of the European Union. Venables provides an overview of European citizens' rights and entitlements and focusses on the rights to free movement of people, looking at patterns of mobility, the costs and benefits of labour mobility.

Part One closes with the challenges European citizenship has faced in the recent past (financial, security and migrant crises) and in upcoming threats, i.e. Brexit. It considers why European citizenship has not been further developed by governments and its struggle to coexist alongside national citizenship.

*In theory, if citizenship is the right to have rights, European citizenship has solid foundations.*

Part Two highlights that although European citizenship has solid foundations, how citizens' rights are practically applied is somewhat lacking. The author stresses the need to implement measures to ensure citizens' rights are better enforced and are enlarged.



Venables calls for clarification on the practical application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the need to enhance EU citizens' political rights. He argues the need for equality for all migrants in Europe. He also makes recommendations to close the gap between theory and practice in order to improve enforcement of rights. Recommendations include: *a one-stop-shop in each country, more emphasis on prevention, collective redress for citizens and quicker action to lift barriers.*

The importance of developing European citizenship by strengthening transnational participatory and representative democracy is also raised. Venables believes that engaging citizens is essential; he states that *'Rights alone will not create citizenship, because people will not feel ownership of them unless they have participated in their development'*.

He also examines the faltering start to the introduction of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) whereby over one million signatures from a minimum of seven Member States can be collected within 12 months in support of a proposed EU Law.

Part Two closes with a focus on how European citizenship could be made more appealing. Linking citizenship with equality, the author suggests three ways to create a more equal European citizenship:

1. A right to be informed and educated for European citizenship
2. Universal access to EU mobility programmes

3. A civil society coalition to campaign for European citizenship

Throughout the book the author argues the case for a holistic approach to the development of an equal European citizenship. He refers to the book's annex which contains the *Guidelines for European Citizens' Rights, Involvement and Trust.*

He concludes with a 12 point action plan which notes the need for

- A more preventative, collective and problem-solving approach to the enforcement of European rights
- A more inclusive approach to European citizenship
- Fostering a civil society movement for European citizenship
- Reforming Article 25 (TFEU) so that the normal decision-making process can be used to develop European citizenship.

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## Justice in the EU: the emergence of transnational solidarity



**Floris de Witte**  
**Oxford University Press**  
**£50.99, pp230**  
**ISBN: 978-0-19-872434-6**

With the European Union (EU) facing an existential crisis, it may not seem the best time to discuss the development of solidarity in Europe and how the EU can contribute more fully to securing social justice.

After all, the United Kingdom has voted to leave the EU; the European Union has signally failed to meet the challenge of hundreds of thousands of desperate people fleeing for their lives from Syria and other war-torn countries; and a group of right-wing governments on the EU's eastern front are threatening to roll back much of the social progress achieved over the years. However, these

developments make it all the more important and necessary at this time to discuss and to do something about developing a 'Social Europe', if the EU is not to lurch sharply to the right and/or break up into its constituent parts.

Dr Floris de Witte is a professor of Law at the London School of Economics, specialising in EU law and governance and this book is based on his PhD thesis. In it he seeks to examine the theoretical basis for solidarity or social justice in EU legislation and in the decisions of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

In particular, he analyses decisions by the CJEU about the entitlement of EU citizens to social security, health care and access to higher education in Member States other than their states of origin. He suggests that three levels of transnational solidarity have developed in the EU, which give rise to different levels of entitlement to benefits for EU citizens in host Member States. The three levels, which he terms 'market solidarity', 'communitarian solidarity' and 'aspirational solidarity', roughly equate to EU workers in a host state where they contribute to the economy and to tax revenues and social security funds; EU citizens resident in another Member State for a significant period of time so that they become part of the local community; and EU citizens who are neither workers nor resident for any length of time in another Member State, but who wish to avail of certain services in that state, such as free third level education, which are not available in the individual's home state.

The first and second categories are entitled to substantial access to benefits and services because they either contribute economically to the host country or have developed social links with society there. The third category represents the aspiration to fully effective citizenship of the EU, whereby all services and benefits in all states should be available to every EU citizen on the same basis. It is currently the least developed of the three categories.

This theoretical analysis does not make for easy reading but Dr de Witte goes on to make a useful analysis of the case law of the CJEU on the levels of entitlement of EU citizens in the three categories he has outlined. He makes the significant point that in all the EU Member States decisions on issues of social justice or the redistribution of resources and the necessary balancing of different interests, are taken through their well-established political systems, which have sufficient credibility and legitimacy for their decisions to be accepted.

At the EU level, however, the law and policy making structures do not have the traditional credibility and legitimacy of the systems in the Member States and so have a lower level of acceptance. This also has the effect that the CJEU plays a larger role in interpreting and enforcing EU legislation than the courts in the Member States but is not well suited to the balancing of interests required.

The author examines the CJEU's jurisprudence on transnational access to benefits and services by EU citizens and suggests that there is a risk of resentment developing in the host states

if open access threatens to undermine their benefit or service systems or is believed to constitute a threat through, for example, so-called 'welfare tourism'. He acknowledges that this 'threat' is much exaggerated and that migrants generally contribute much more than they receive from host states but argues that the CJEU should be more sensitive to this issue.

He suggests that a wider understanding of the rationale that he has outlined for transnational benefit sharing among EU citizens and a more careful approach by the CJEU would make this development more acceptable and allow of further social progress.

Surprisingly, in a book that examines the EU's capacity to "*significantly contribute to the pursuit of justice*", Dr de Witte makes only two references to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter) and no substantial references to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), by which all Member States and candidate states of the EU are bound.

In seeking a theoretical or philosophical basis for social justice in the EU, the ECHR and the Charter are particularly significant as they provide a firm foundation in international human rights law which is widely accepted across the whole of Europe. When the Maastricht Treaty established citizenship of the EU in 1992, it also declared that the protection of fundamental rights (principally the rights set out in the ECHR) was one of the binding general principles of EU law.

In 2000 the Member States of the EU

adopted the Charter, the Preamble to which declared that the European Union

*"[I]s founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity: it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice".<sup>1</sup>*

The Charter is based on the ECHR but it updates and strengthens it and includes social and economic rights which are not adequately covered by the ECHR. The Charter became effectively a Bill of Rights for the EU and in 2009 the Lisbon Treaty amended the Treaty of European Union to state at Article 6.1 that *"The Union recognises the rights, freedoms, and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ... which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties"*, making it legally enforceable and a key part of the constitution of the EU.

The Charter goes beyond the ECHR by including a right to dignity, a right to work, to 'good administration' and rights for the elderly and persons with disabilities. It also includes a whole section (*Title IV, Articles 27 to 38*) entitled *"Solidarity"*, which includes a

right to collective bargaining and fair and just working conditions; rights to social security and health care, and consumer protection. Some of the rights included in the Solidarity section are less directly enforceable than the other parts of the Charter but they are persuasive and must be taken into account by the CJEU in making its decisions.

Though still not widely known to the general public, the Charter is being used increasingly in cases before the CJEU and in the domestic litigation that goes beforehand. It has already had some very significant effects in relation to the Republic of Ireland<sup>2</sup>, where two decisions by the CJEU have caused significant changes in asylum and protection law<sup>3</sup>, while two other decisions in cases taken from Ireland have struck down an EU Directive on Data Retention<sup>4</sup> and an agreement between the European Commission and the US authorities on the security of data transferred to the US by Facebook from its European headquarters in Dublin<sup>5</sup>.

In terms of Dr de Witte's concerns about increasing the credibility and legitimacy of EU legislation and CJEU decisions in the area of social justice, greater awareness and use of the Charter, together with his concepts of transnational solidarity, could help to explain and win support for decisions on

1 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in *European Union: Consolidated Treaties Charter of Fundamental Rights*, Luxembourg, 2010

2 Given the current uncertainty about the UK's relationship to the EU, I will only refer to cases affecting the Republic of Ireland.

3 M.E. v Refugee Applications Commissioner and Minister for Justice and Equality C-493/10 (joined with N.S. v Secretary of State for the Home Department C-411/10); and M.M. v Minister for Justice and Equality C-277/11 and C-560/14

4 Digital Rights Ireland Ltd v Minister for Communications C-293/12

5 Schrems v Data Protection Commissioner C-362/14

the availability of benefits and services throughout the EU.

The greatest social justice issue facing the EU at this time is, of course, the asylum seeker/migrant crisis. Dr de Witte does not deal with this in his book but the Charter, with its explicit assertion of the right to asylum and of non refoulement to states where there is a danger of the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, could and should form the basis of a humane and inclusive EU policy to replace the unacceptable and failed deal concluded with Turkey in mid-2016.

Combatting the current deep disillusionment with the EU, fuelled to a considerable extent by the austerity policies of the last decade, is likely, however, to require more than just explaining the basis for more inclusive social policies. There is a need as well for a new solidarity by trades unions, civil society and political forces that support a democratic and inclusive Europe to mobilise to oppose the rise of far right racist and xenophobic movements and to put a new emphasis on building a 'Social Europe' with a more democratic system of governance.

Dr de Witte's book makes a useful contribution to the discussion that is needed around this issue.

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